Good practice in providing services: Victims of child abuse

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Preface

The purpose of this document is to assist agencies wanting to develop and/or improve services targeted towards supporting victims of child abuse and/or neglect. The findings in this paper are based on existing literature in order to provide a sample of services that address their needs and rights, with the aim of guiding future services on what is considered ‘good practice’ in program and service delivery.

It is acknowledged that each state and territory will have its own laws and policies for specialist services in response to child victimisation. The sample of services described in this paper will not be relevant or applicable within all jurisdictions, but can provide insight into some of the elements of ‘good practice’. Services range from educative, preventative, therapeutic, targeted and long term support for child victims of abuse and/or neglect which are provided by government and non-government sectors.

The diversity of the services reflects the complex nature of child victimisation, the demographics of the victims seeking support, the type of support sought and the need for services to be able to respond adequately. The good practice indicators covered in this paper are extensive but are not necessarily exhaustive – it is not required for each element of good practice to be incorporated in a service for it to be beneficial for a victim. Organisations are encouraged to take these features of good practice into consideration when establishing support services and developing programs for children who have been victimised.

1. Introduction

The term ‘child protection’ encompasses a broad range of issues including but not limited to; custody and support, child abuse and neglect, violence against children, child prostitution, child pornography, sex tourism, child labour and child trafficking. In response to this, organisations and governments on a global and domestic level work towards addressing these issues in providing broader protections for children.

Effective responses to child victimisation is often complex and require a multifaceted approach from services and agencies ranging from police, counsellors, courts, child protection, health, education and social welfare. This involvement of multiple services from various fields is a contributing factor to the difficulties that exist in accessibility for those seeking help from the system, even more so when the clients are already considered so vulnerable.

The National Framework of Rights and Services for Victims of Crime 2013-2016 (“The National Framework”) carries out the commitment to identify and improve service provisions and programs to victims of crime within Australia. Strategy 4.1.1 of the implementation plan is to research and report on good practice initiatives in providing services to vulnerable victims of crime to increase awareness of victims’ rights in appropriate justice responses. The paper brings together various service providers and programs that work towards addressing the needs of children who have been victimised, and compliments existing professional standards and competence guidelines on a state, national and international level. By providing an insight into existing services, this paper hopes to provide guidance about the needs of children and young people in relation to the appropriate level of protection, assistance and support that can guide them throughout their journey of recovery from the emotional and physical trauma that results from being victimised. This paper further aims to provide a complete and thorough understanding of what entails ‘good practice’ in order to predicate national approaches to supporting and protecting children and young peoples’ rights, through effective service delivery.
2. Definition

“Children become victims when they experience involuntary physical, sexual, psychological or emotional injuries, loss or death at the hands of another human being, or when they are threatened by such actions against themselves. Children may be victimised by adults and other children, by family members (parents, siblings, other relatives), by friends and acquaintances and by strangers”

Lewit & Schuurmann Baker 1996

3. Background

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), established in 1989, is the most widely ratified international human rights treaty in existence, with all but two countries having ratified it within their domestic legislation. Encompassing the entire spectrum of human rights under one document, all aspects of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that are applicable to persons under the age of 18 are acknowledged. The convention further recognises that children also have the right to special protection due to their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. The main guiding principle that is fundamental to the UNCRC is the basis that “the best interest of the child” is of paramount consideration when determining actions and decisions. It is so often found that due to their dependency and vulnerability, children’s voices are seldom heard in relation to important decisions being made that have a direct effect on their lives. Although Australia ratified the convention a year after its development, there are still debates raised in relation to the lack of adequate protection of fundamental human rights for children; with particular reference to children who experience homelessness, mental health issues, disabilities, who are in immigration detention as well as Indigenous children. Many of these issues also reflect the need for a cohesive national framework that addresses these pressing matters in a uniform manner.

The lack of uniform definitions in relation to child abuse and neglect amongst the varying jurisdictions is a problematic factor in applying a coherent public policy approach to child protection. With each jurisdiction having its own standards against which to evaluate the performance of child protection agencies, inconsistencies with the methods of interventions to ensure all reports of child abuse and neglect are investigated, become evident.

The consequential trauma that is associated with being a victim of crime at such a young and impressionable age sees many victims suffering tremendously in regards to their psychological
and physiological development as they are forced to cope with the trauma throughout the various stages of their life. Not only are the short term effects of child victimisation detrimental to a person’s development but the long terms effects see a rise in mental health issues and impede heavily on an individual’s capacity to live a full and constructive life.

The social burden of childhood abuse and neglect grows each year. As an issue that affects individuals, families and communities alike, it is essential that people become more aware of ways in which to respond to issues relating to child abuse. A history of child abuse and neglect is also a very large contributing factor of youth suicide, homelessness, mental illness, substance abuse and unemployment.

4. Types of child abuse

In order to understand the complexities involved in child victimisation, it is essential to understand the types of child abuse that lead to children becoming victims. The World Health Organisation gives the following definition of child abuse;

“Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power”

Abuse of any kind is seen to be an individual experience. The nature, severity, intensity, frequency, relationship between victim and offender, support from non-offending family/friends, acknowledgement of victimisation as well as offending are all contributing factors that shape this individual experience.

Child abuse is commonly classified into the following four categories: neglect, physical abuse, family violence and sexual abuse, however research has indicated there is an extensive overlap with victimisation experiences within child abuse. The abuse can be a single incident or a number of different incidents that occur over a long period.

Neglect and emotional abuse

Neglect is referred to as a range of circumstances in which parents fail to adequately provide for a child’s needs in terms of their physical necessities of food, shelter, clothing and healthcare; emotional needs of love, support and encouragement; providing their children with educational opportunities as well as ensuring that the child’s needs of safety, supervision and moral and legal guidance are met. Complaints of neglect constitute a majority of the referrals made to child protection agencies and is often seen as the most common form of child abuse. An argument that is often posed is the close causal link between neglect and socio-economic status. Parents/caregivers who are in need of financial
assistance and are dependent on welfare are often stigmatised as a pivot for child abuse and neglect, however research has shown that the emotional abuse and neglect of children can occur within all families, irrespective of socio-economic status. Neglect of a child has detrimental effects on the development of their physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing. Emotional abuse can include verbal abuse, rejection, isolation and bullying. Emotional abuse is not subject to one particular cause and can occur within the home, schools, recreational facilities and other organisations, often leaving the victim with long lasting scars which can lead to depression, anxiety and in some cases self-harm.

In regards to child victimisation cyber bullying has become a growing epidemic in regards to emotional distress with the repercussions being detrimental to the mental health of the victim. Due to the anonymity and frequency involved in cyber bullying it becomes apparent that the effects can be highly traumatising and hidden, resulting in social withdrawal, fearfulness, self-harm and suicide.

Physical abuse
The physical act of violence against children is a serious issue in Australia. The physical abuse of a child occurs when a child suffers significant physical injuries; it is the most visible form of maltreatment. The injury could take the form of cuts, fractures, bruises, bites, burns, internal injuries and poisoning. It may be that the injury is inflicted intentionally or the result of an excessive form of punishment or discipline. Physical abuse could come in the form of schoolyard bullying or may occur within the home or within institutional settings. Excessive physical abuse can result in death, particularly for infants and toddlers, however most physical abuse peaks whilst the child is between the ages of 4-8 years. As research has indicated, children who are victims of physical abuse are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety and low self-esteem, have problems in developing and maintaining relationships and be more prone to aggressive and violent outbursts later on in life.

Family violence
Many studies have confirmed that family violence and child abuse frequently co-exist together, with parents who are violent towards each other, being at higher risk of physically abusing their child as well. International research into dual exposure states that most instances where children are killed as a direct result of physical violence within the home have a history of domestic violence. Studies have found that children who witness regular acts of violence have greater emotional and behavioural problems than non-exposed children. Although not directly victims of crime, children who witness family violence may experience symptoms of trauma as if they themselves were victims of violence. Many children who bear witness to family violence are at a high risk of learning disabilities, anxiety, and depression as well as long term developmental problems. Studies have also found that adults, who were exposed to domestic violence as children, tend to have developed trauma-related symptoms, with women being more inclined to being re-victimised in their adult relationships and men growing up to be at risk of violent offending.

Sexual abuse and sexual assault
A study conducted by Australian Institutes of Crime stated “for females aged 10-14 years, the rate of sexual assault victimisation was 525 per 100,000 population compared with 94 per 100,000 for males. The rate of victimisation for females aged 15-24 years was 382 per 100,000 population”. Although many child sexual assault cases go unreported, the increase of awareness around the issue has allowed society to be more open and alert about its occurrence. Sexual abuse of a child can be described as any incident where an adult engages a minor in a sexual act or exposes the minor to inappropriate sexual behaviour or material. The term is also applicable to an incident where a child is coerced by another child into sexual activity. Whilst all children are vulnerable, statistics show that girls are more likely than boys to be victims, however, children who suffer from a disability are seven times more likely to be victims of sexual abuse.
Although the research provides us with these statistics, recent revelations, particularly through the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has made it evident that underreporting for male victims of sexual abuse is common, highlighting the possibility that statistics in regards to reporting may be skewed within this demographic.

Victims of child sexual abuse exhibit a range of symptoms and behaviours which heavily impede on their development into adulthood. Many child victims suffer greatly from sleeping problems, detachment and social withdrawal. They are also more inclined to develop eating disorders, suicide attempts and suffer from substance abuse later on in their teenage/adult life if the matter is not addressed.

Organised child sexual abuse refers to children being subject to a range of serious harms including child prostitution as well as the manufacture and distribution of child pornography and human trafficking. Often family members or those close to the victim are the ones who make children available for abuse whilst other children are trafficked.

5. Responding to child victimisation

Child victimisation is a complex phenomenon. Its causes are multifaceted and quite often the act of abuse is kept hidden and considered a private matter. As we become more aware of the negative effects that are caused by child abuse and neglect it becomes evident to see the need for child protective services to be transparent and accountable.

A multidisciplinary approach for services in response to child abuse is essential to ensure support is accessible from the very beginning and is carried on until it is no longer needed by the survivor. Child protection services generally fall under two categories.

a) Services that adopt a preventative methods approach which focus on targeted intervention and early education

b) Policies and programs that respond to the needs of victims and provide assistance once the abuse has occurred, which work towards the process of healing and restoration.

In recent years, government bodies, non-government organisations and local community services have recognised the growing benefits of preventative methods of intervention. Evidence-based initiatives that have a focus on intervention are seen to be highly effective in reducing the maltreatment of children as well as improving family relationships and being more cost effective in the long run. Early intervention methods have proven to be successful in not only preventing abuse from occurring but also in detecting early onset behaviours that indicate victimisation, whereas programs that deal with the aftermath of abuse instil survivors of abuse with coping strategies and mechanisms for behavioural change. Both of these categories play an important role within the community.
6. Good practice indicators for preventative services

The purpose of this paper is to promote an evidence-based approach to protecting and supporting children with principles that are consistent and uniform throughout Australia. In order to ensure appropriate and effective service delivery the Council of Australian Governments (2009) provides the following indicators that constitute good practice within child protection services.

a) Address and engage communities on issues relating to child abuse and neglect and raise issues on strategies for protecting children

b) Multiagency approach – knowledge and willingness to collaborate with other services in order to get the best outcome for the victim/survivor

c) The services and/or programs are evidence-based, taking into account good practice models from a wide range of research

d) Complies with current child protection legislation and reporting requirements

e) Ensure staff are screened for employment and are qualified, trained and supervised and the Working with Children Check is conducted

f) Provide priority access for children who are at immediate risk of being victimised

g) Provide a safe and secure environment that is adaptable to each child’s needs

h) High level of confidentiality

i) Identifies that diversity exists amongst clients, families and communities in all areas, including class, gender, culture, religion, disability, age, status, sexual preference and value system

j) Develop professional and therapeutic relationships with clients, family, support networks and broader community

In response to the need for an interagency approach for child protection services, NSW Health (2005) provides indicators of good practice that are applicable for services in relation to child victimisation:

a) The safety, welfare and wellbeing of the child or young person are paramount

b) Child protection decisions must take into account culture, disability, language, religion and gender of children, their families and caregivers

c) Children and young people must be given the opportunity to participate

d) Non-offending family members must be given the opportunity to participate in decisions which effect the safety, welfare and wellbeing of the child

e) Children and young people who are unable to live with their families will be provided with an environment which meets their care, support, education and health needs

f) Enable parents by promoting their parenting role as a motivator for positive change

g) Government agencies will work in partnerships with each other, with non-government organisations and with the child or young person and their family to secure and sustain their safety, welfare and wellbeing

And finally, Hunter and Robertson (2014) provide the final three good practice indicators this paper will use to demonstrate the quality of services in relation to child protection and welfare.

a) Build on children’s resiliency by promoting and effective and consistent caregiving

b) Understand and apply knowledge of children’s need at each stage of their physical, emotional and social development

c) Services establish mechanisms for consumer feedback and input for continual improvement. Services and/or programs are also evaluated independently
7. Preventative services

Preventative services that are designed to stop the possibility of child abuse and neglect from occurring focus their programs on changing attitudes, beliefs and behaviours within the community. They are mainly in the form of educational initiatives and programs that target the community at the earliest stages in order to embed safe practices and behaviours, and direct most of their program initiatives to being trauma-informative and resilience building. However many preventative services are also targeted towards families and children who display risk factors that may increase the likelihood of abuse and/or neglect occurring. These risk factors can include; poverty, mental health problems, family violence, young parental age, parental substance abuse as well as parental incarceration. Although not all of these risk factors are causal to situations where child abuse/neglect occurs, research has shown that their presence may increase the likelihood of child maltreatment. Usually families are referred to such targeted preventative services once risk assessments have been completed and it is believed they may benefit from the service. The purpose of these targeted services is to respond to the immediate needs of victims of child abuse and/or neglect with the overall aim being to reduce the likelihood of the abuse and/or neglect from reoccurring or continuing. Methods of such intervention include services that relieve social stress on families and address the risk factors for child abuse and/or neglect through initiatives such as home visits, parent education programs and respite care for children with special needs as well as improving children’s awareness on safe behaviours and providing children with access to other services if needed.

National

The following examples, although not exhaustive, consist of various services and programs that are delivered at a national and various state levels throughout Australia. These services provide examples of good practice indicators that have been discussed previously. Information about each service has been sourced from their websites and where available from independent evaluations.

Life Education

Life Education is the largest independent Australian health and drug education provider for children aged as young as three. Running for 35 years, their programs are age appropriate and cover a range of issues from healthy eating, positive communication and personal safety. The programs aim to empower and encourage young people to make safer and healthier choices through education as well as to reduce the incidences of drug use and misuse. One of the unique features of the programs is its focus on health as being about physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing, encompassing all aspects of the developmental process of a child’s life.

There have been a number of evaluations conducted on the Life Education programs and its service delivery. Being a health education and promotion program, the programs delivered by Life Education are consistent with the individual-interpersonal and group continuum that is required for good practice. As well as having an interactive approach that encourages participation Life Education incorporates a wide range of activities that promote safety and encourages personal growth and empowerment.

Stop the Violence

Research shows that women and girls with disabilities are more likely to experience abuse within the home as well as through institutional settings. They are also more inclined to greater social disadvantage and many have difficulty acquiring paid work and obtaining secondary education. A project aimed to promote violence prevention and responses for women and girls with disabilities, Stop the Violence is a collaborative approach by People with Disabilities Australia, Women with Disabilities Australia and a research team from the University of New South Wales. The project works towards providing an evidence base for future reforms of policies, legislations and service delivery to be able to respond more effectively to the needs of women and girls with disabilities who are at risk of violence.

The project addresses a very serious issue in society and works towards providing better outcomes for victims of abuse who are vulnerable
and marginalised. The project is still in progress and is working towards improving the service delivery and responses of government for women and girls with disabilities. The collaboration of services from research, health, employment and justice allows for a comprehensive multiagency approach. The service also plays a major role in bringing forward minority and marginalised groups to the surface, with a primary focus on gender and disability.

**Smart Online Safe Online**

A program developed by NAPCAN, *Smart Online Safe Offline (SOSO)* is designed to keep young internet users safe whilst using the internet. The program is aimed towards children aged between nine and 15 years and acts as an educational resource in helping children and young people understand the dangers that exist online and educate them on safe practices and how to manage their personal safety. SOSO is easily accessible for children as it operates through social networking sites as well as having its own website where users are able to not only gain more information, but report behaviour they find uncomfortable or suspicious. The program was developed to address the high proportion of children and young teenagers using the internet, as well as the increase in awareness around cyber bullying, predation and online grooming.

There have been two campaigns since the programs establishment. The first campaign was based around educating people on the dangers of online predation, the second targeting online bullying. An independent evaluation of the program found both the campaigns to have achieved statistical shifts in awareness, attitude and intended behaviour. The program has also been commended on its innovative and interactive approach, allowing easy access for children as well as having information and resources available for parents and caregivers.

**New South Wales**

*National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN) - Love Bites*

*Love Bites* is a successful school-based Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Assault prevention program, developed by NAPCAN. Based on the best practice standards for education programs, *Love Bites* is aimed at students aged 14-16 years and establishes an innovative and interactive arena for students to learn about respectful relationships with a focus on issues concerning relationship violence and sexual assault in a method that is relevant and engaging. The Love Bites workshops consist of hip hop, drama and artwork allowing students to express themselves creatively whilst becoming aware of the issues surrounding domestic and family violence and sexual assault.

*Love Bites* has been evaluated a number of times since it was first introduced in high schools in 2003. The program is seen to effectively deliver information to students about domestic violence and educate them on respectful relationships. The evaluations discuss the good practice principles, as the program aims to empower children, giving them skills and tools to be more aware of harmful behaviour as well as learning about respecting relationships and people in a way that is relevant and interactive. One of the factors that contribute to the success of the programs is its constant upgrades and changes that allow it to stay relevant and engaging to its audience.

**Brighter Futures**

*Brighter Futures* is part of a range of programs developed by the NSW Government as part of their early intervention and placement prevention services. The program is provided to families who have children under the age of nine or families who are expecting a child, who have experienced or are experiencing a range of complex problems including domestic and family violence, substance abuse and mental health problems. The program delivers case management support; quality children services- which aim to meet the developmental and cultural needs of children; structured home visiting as well as parenting programs. The program gives priority to families with children under the age of three and families referred by Aboriginal Maternal Infant Health Service. Services are provided over a two year period in order to produce lasting positive effects for children.

The *Brighter Futures* program was evaluated by the NSW Department of Community Services in 2010.
The report stated that given the “extraordinary challenge” the program set out to achieve, it is effectively implemented. The results from the evaluations showed that the services provided by *Brighter Futures* were very effective in meeting the needs and improving the outcomes for participant families. Particular mention was given to the work *Brighter Futures* does with Indigenous families, with the report stating that casework relationships were seen to be a key contributor to the program’s success as they helped reduce stress within the household and helped in building stronger relationships within families.

**Aboriginal Intensive Family Support Services**

*Aboriginal Intensive Family Support Services* is an *Intensive Family Based Service (IFBS)*. It is an intensive home based program for Aboriginal families in crisis, where children, who have been placed in out-of-home care, are restored with their families. The service is delivered in four locations and provides families in crisis with in-home 24 hour, seven days a week intensive service over a 12 week period, followed by a step down service for the following six months. The service deals with a range of issues such as; domestic violence, mental health problems, homelessness and precarious housing and parental drug and alcohol problems.

Evaluations of the services have reported positive results. According to post intervention reports, there was a reduction in child protection reports even in families where parents experienced drug, alcohol and mental health problems as well as an increase in family. The evaluations had further suggestions of improvement including increased post intervention support in order to enhance program delivery. The program complies with the best practice principles as it adheres to the promotion of a child-safe environment and includes children as active participants throughout the intervention program.

**Australian Capital Territory**

**Bravehearts – Ditto**

*Ditto’s Keep Safe Adventure Show* is an education program run by Bravehearts. The program mascot, Ditto – a friendly lion – interactively educates children on personal safety through songs, utilising easy to understand concepts. The program is aimed at preventing the incidence of sexual assault, school yard bullying and domestic violence. Parents and teachers attend sessions where they are educated and provided with information on early behavioural signs of abuse, how to respond to such behaviours, legal obligations, what language to use when discussing issues as well as ways in which to educate and empower children.

There have been two independent evaluations of Ditto’s *Keep Children Safe Show*, both of which have demonstrated the effectiveness of the program in delivering personal safety and good practice principles to not only children but also parents and educators alike. The evaluation reports indicate that children who participated in the programs had an increased awareness of unsafe situations as well as gaining the knowledge of protective behaviour. The reports also stated that the delivery of the program had great potential to contribute to the reduction of the child sexual assault incidences as well as other forms of abuse such as bullying and family violence.

**Victoria**

**Child Protection Services – Early Years Education Project (EYE)**

The *EYE Project*, an initiative designed by Child Protection Services, is targeted towards children in early child care who have been, or are at risk of being abused or neglected. The three year program consists of quality care and education five days a week, with the overall objective being to ensure that disadvantaged children are given the opportunity to realise their full potential and begin primary education with equal levels of development to that of their peers. The program initiatives are founded upon a heavily researched evidence base and features: a high staff to children ratio, qualified and professionally trained staff, attachment-based care, child centred curriculum, family support initiatives, and a focus on building relationships with parents to sustain their children’s participation in the program.
The program is part of the *Early Years Education Research Project* and is currently in the process of a three year evaluation that consists of a randomised controlled trial. The research evaluation is in conjunction with Melbourne University and the Royal Children’s Hospital and aims to produce evidence on the long term benefits of quality education and care in the early stages of not only development but of emerging problems as well. The program itself is heavily based on scientific research which shows that investing in education within the early years of life significantly reduces the risks of adverse social outcomes. The program is designed in response to evidence which shows that children who have experienced trauma early in their development, enrol in primary education with skills two years behind that of their peers and are unable to catch up. The *EYE project* consists of a multidisciplinary approach encouraging professional input from areas such as mental health, education and policy design to ensure that service delivery is at optimum levels and children are gaining the skills they need throughout their development. As well as providing and promoting familial input throughout the process, the *EYE project* provides education over a three year period or until the child reaches school age, ensuring they persist with educational development for children who are at risk.

**Bursting the Bubble**

*Bursting the Bubble* is a Victorian-based interactive website for young people who are living in homes where family violence occurs. The website provides quizzes and checklists for young people to identify forms of abuse within the household as well as answering any questions they may have on family violence. The website also provides useful links to various services, a safety action plan and many other useful resources for young children who may be reluctant to seek help outside of home.

The program was evaluated in 2004 and later updated in 2007. The evaluation was overall positive with the website proving to successfully educate young people who access the website on appropriate behaviour amongst families, information on sexual violence as well as services they can contact to get help. Being online the program is easily accessible and is designed in a child friendly manner. The website also won the Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Award in 2005.

**South Australia**

**Yarning On – Shine SA**

Created by Shine SA, *Yarning On – Aboriginal Sexual Health Program* is an initiative comprised of two programs; *Aboriginal Focus Schools Programs* and *Investing in Aboriginal Youth*. These programs aim to deliver sexual health education to improve the sexual and reproductive health, wellbeing and overall safety of young Aboriginal people in South Australia. The program was established due to the rising inequitable sexual health outcomes for young Indigenous adults, such as high pregnancy rates for teenagers and an increase in STD levels. The key component to the program is the high level of community involvement. This community engagement allows for the program to be delivered to Aboriginal children in a way that is culturally appropriate and is more adaptable at meeting their specific needs. Evaluations of the *Yarning On – Aboriginal Sexual Health Program* have been well received as the program is seen to effectively deliver and educate young Indigenous adults on sexual health and wellbeing. Once the program had been rolled out, there was a documented increase in the use of contraception as well as a decrease in violence according to community reports. The program was established on the principles of best practice in sexual health and relationships, education (SHARE). A key factor that is demonstrated throughout most of the evaluations that have been conducted is the level of respect for culture that is incorporated throughout all stages of the program, allowing for a more interactive and engaging form of understanding within the community.

**Western Australia**

**Strong Families**

Based on the New Zealand model ‘Strengthening Families’, *Strong Families* is a government initiative which acknowledges that accessibility to agencies that provide services for families with complex and
multifaceted needs are scarce and unattainable in most cases. The initiative works towards a collaborative interagency approach in order to incorporate government agencies, non-government agencies, community members and community organisations in developing improved processes and the proper utilisation of resources as well as developing stronger relationships and quicker response methods to the needs of families and the community.

Evaluations of Strong Families report on the effectiveness of the program in engaging families who experience greater social disadvantage and who have a range of complex needs, with services that are appropriate. The findings of the evaluations report that many families who partake in Strong Families experience an increase in accessibility and engagement with services, and as a result have noted on the long term improvements in the wellbeing of family members. Strong Families also have their own monitoring group that is comprised of representatives from each of the service delivery partners across health, police, education, welfare and policy in order to ensure they are meeting their key goals.36

Northern Territory

Jaru Pirrjirdi (Strong Voices)

Extended from the Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation, Jaru Pirrjirdi (Strong Voices) is a youth development and leadership project aimed at young adults between the ages of 15 and 25 years. The project acts as an aftercare program for ‘at risk’ youth and serves to create purposeful and positive futures. The program is delivered through a six level structure, with each level serving a purpose towards developing the confidence, experience and capacity of young adults. By doing so the project also aims to steer the students away from issues such as substance abuse as well as allowing them to embrace and explore their culture. The program offers activities that interest the youth such as; graffiti art, dance and music workshops, educational setups – with particular focus on literacy, numeracy and geography, cultural excursions, sports and recreation projects, mentoring and arts and media projects.

The Australian Government, Department of Health Evaluation stated that the Jaru Pirrjirdi (Strong Voices) Project is an “essential program which was established to address the underlying community issues of petrol sniffing and other forms of substance abuse but has in fact served as an outlet for young indigenous adults to reconnect with their culture and become more active and supportive members of their community”37. The evaluation stated the key factor that contributed to the success of the project was the quality of care and mentoring available, as many of the Jaru mentors are credible to the youth as they themselves have experienced many of the same community difficulties and pressures. Recommendations were made however to improve the quality and outcomes of the project such as having more family involvement considering the cultural significance of the program as well as having more governmental support.

Queensland

Act for Kids

Act for Kids was established under the premise that ‘all kids have a right to a safe and happy childhood, free from abuse and neglect’.38 As a not-for-profit organisation, Act for Kids provides educational programs and advocacy campaigns as well as intensive therapy programs for children who have experienced trauma resulting from abuse and neglect. The SafeKIDS program is an Indigenous-based program that offers short-term accommodation for kids who are not safe within their own home. The service was established in recognition of the limited number of foster carers within the communities that the program exists in. The safe houses allow children to reside safely within their community whilst maintaining a connection to their family and culture. Along with these intervention services, Act for Kids also encourage empowerment and safety amongst all children, the Be Safe with Emmy program is a school-based educational program that teaches young kids to recognise when they feel safe and unsafe and has had increasingly positive feedback from both parents and teachers.
Evaluations for *Act for Kids* have been increasingly positive since its establishment. The services provided to school children, according to parents and teachers have seen an outstanding improvement in children’s awareness of safe behaviour and unwelcomed unsafe behaviour. In many cases, once the programs had been completed, an increase in disclosure of abuse from students was reported. The services of counselling and therapy have helped empower not only survivors of child abuse, but their families as well. One of the characteristics that make *Act for Kids* an example of a leading organisation in terms of good practice is the organisation’s ability to provide support at all stages of intervention. *Act for Kids* are constantly evaluating and remoulding their programs in order to keep up to date in their therapy and support practices.

**Bumblebees Therapeutic Preschool (BTPS)**

Established as a therapeutic preschool home visiting service, *BTPS* provides counselling and education for children and carers. The program is aimed for children aged between 3-5 years old who are at risk of harm or have experienced some form of child abuse. Working with other mainstream services, the program aims to increase the resiliency in children through education and developing on their social competence, autonomy and knowledge on appropriate behaviour between themselves, their peers and adults. The program was established in response to the higher levels of parental related stresses and problems in the Bundaberg area and works towards addressing the effects of trauma that occurs from child abuse. The program has been independently evaluated and exemplifies principles of good practice. The program is a primary example of evidence-based practice, as many of the components stem from the large body of literature on the impact of early trauma and the benefits of resiliency. The program also demonstrates the need for establishing relationships within the community as well as with stakeholders in order to provide an effective support network. As a further measure of good practice, the program also promotes cultural relevance as Indigenous practices embedded within the programs and services.

Follow-up sessions for families who participated in the program saw a reduction in problematic behaviour amongst children as well as an improvement in levels of resiliency. Greatest levels of improvements were seen amongst Indigenous children, further reaffirming the benefits of cultural practices within the program.

**One Chance at Childhood**

A policy initiative developed in 2008 by the Queensland State Government, Department of Child Safety, *One Chance at Childhood* is a targeted intervention program that is aimed at enhancing the safety and wellbeing for babies and toddlers aged 0-4 years. The specialised staff members are trained to intervene at three crucial stages: the initial stage in which babies and toddlers first come in contact with the child protection system, when babies and toddlers are reunified with their parents and when reunification fails and alternative homes must be found for the babies and toddlers. The main aim of the policy initiative is to ensure that children are given a stable and healthy start to life. The program provides parents who are at risk of abusing their child with a 12 month period to better themselves through intensive specialist support and remedial services. If they fail to do so, permanent homes for the children are secured.

Although there are no evaluations for the program of yet, the 2009-2010 *Child Protection Partnership Report* stated as one of their key initiatives, to expand the model so service outcomes for children under the age of four can continue to be delivered.

**International**

**USA**

**Safe Dates**

Designed to address the issues surrounding dating violence victimisation and perpetration amongst teenagers, *Safe Dates* is a school and community-based program that aims to prevent violence within relationships. The program is a 45-50 minutes session where young adults are educated on why people abuse, what constitutes abuse within a relationship, helping friends who...
are in abusive relationships, overcoming gender stereotypes, developing conflict resolution skills as well as providing greater awareness of community services that address such issues.

There have been many evaluations of the Safe Dates programs since it was first introduced within schools and communities. One of the studies found that adolescents who participated in the program reported significantly lower levels of psychological and sexual abuse on all four follow-up periods than the young adults in control groups, indicating that the program is effective in achieving its aim in preventing violence amongst young adults in relationships. The program operates as a preventative method as it works towards behaviour change within young adults. The program also includes parent and teacher participation to ensure that the skills and values taught within the program are reinforced in the home and classroom.

8. Good practice indicators for responsive services

In order to provide a good practice guideline for responsive services, it’s important to incorporate aspects of practice that are more focused on individual needs of recovery in order to address the long term effects of trauma that has occurred. The majority of the time these symptoms are psychological and behavioural and have heavily impeded on the individual’s transition into adulthood. Adults Surviving Child Abuse (ASCA) is a leading national organisation in providing support to adults who have experienced child abuse, ASCA provides a set of best practice guidelines by which their organisation is centred on. Based on empirical studies, ASCA’s guidelines consider the following principles as most important when dealing with victims of child abuse.

a) Provide a safe place for the client
b) Ensure client empowerment and collaboration
c) Communicate and sustain hope and respect
d) Facilitate disclosure without overwhelming the client
e) Be familiar with a number of different therapeutic tools and models
f) Views symptoms as adaptions
g) Have a broad knowledge of trauma theory and provide the client with psycho-education
h) Teach clients adaptive strategies (that is, teach clients self-care, distress tolerance strategies and arousal reduction strategies)
i) Teach clients to monitor their thoughts and responses
j) Teach clients interpersonal and assertiveness skills

ACSA’s 10 guiding principles, in conjunction with the good practice guidelines aforementioned in this paper provide a basis for the best practice standard by which responsive services operate on.
9. Responsive services

Responsive services aim to provide for the long term implications of child abuse on the victim. They are often seen as a reactive response to abuse rather than a proactive one and are effective in the healing process, particularly for adults who disclose their experiences with abuse much later in life. It has become evident over time that ‘one size does not fit all’ as many of the trauma and experiences faced by victims of child abuse is individual and personal. Therefore it is necessary that good practice guidelines for responsive services be focussed to the individual needs for victims/survivors in order to address the long term trauma of abuse.

These responses also include legislation and policies in place to govern behaviours and actions which are harmful to children.

Australia

Adults Surviving Child Abuse (ASCA)

Established in 1995, ASCA provides advocacy and support to people, families and the broader community who are affected by childhood abuse. As a leader in the field of complex trauma, ASCA is built on the foundation that by providing the right services for survivors of child abuse, recovery for victims is possible. They base their professional support on a list of empirically-based principles, which creates a foundation for best practice guidelines. The professional services provided by ASCA range from phone counselling support, educational and development workshops for survivors and their families, and advocacy, as well as information and resources.

ASCA establish and develop their initiatives and services on the best practice principles. Their services are aimed to not only empower and support survivors of childhood abuse, but to also break the silence and raise awareness on the issues surrounding abuse in order to break the cycle and intergenerational effects that occur. The organisation offers in-house workshops for survivors of child abuse which teach self-help skills and resources to help victims recover from the impact of childhood trauma as well as psychoeducation regarding the impact of trauma on the brain. In doing this ASCA also works towards building more appropriate service delivery within public health services in dealing with the traumas of child abuse. ASCA’s advisory panel includes professionals from a range of disciplines such as child development, mental health, sexual abuse, health and welfare, complex trauma as well as law. ASCA has also become a leader in policy, practice and research since the announcement of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Whispering to Horses – Equine Facilitated Therapy

Equine Facilitated Therapy, a program delivered by Phoenix House, is an alternative method of healing for children who have been traumatised by sexual abuse. The program incorporates a mixture of cognitive therapy, talk therapy and animal assisted therapy to act as an effective method of treatment. A study conducted by Signal et al40 evaluated the Equine Facilitated Therapy program running at Phoenix House in order to assess its efficacy in treating depressive symptoms in survivors of child sexual abuse as well as assessing its effectiveness across different age groups. The program consists of teaching children how to groom, handle and ride horses – activities which were found to assist children in overcoming insecurities and fears, reduce anxiety levels and alleviate behavioural issues.

Horses tend to respond to orders in a favourable manner giving victims the ability to have a sense of control as well as validation. The interaction with the horses was also an important element as horses are sensitive to change as well as being responsive to behaviour and body language and therefore require a calm and confident approach. The process was seen to provide children with an avenue to understand their feelings and emotions and focus on them as opposed to escaping from them.

Evaluation reports support the program as a culturally appropriate method of therapy and notes that programs such as Equine Facilitated Therapy work particularly well with children as it does not have a linguistic and/or cognitive component in
a traditional sense but has the values of them embedded in the program allowing children to benefit from therapy in a way which is not only interactive but also rehabilitative.

**Tzedek**

Founded in 2012, **Tzedek** is an advocacy group for victims/survivors of child sexual abuse within the Jewish community. The organisation was developed in response to increased allegations of serious child sexual abuse within the Jewish community and the cover ups that occurred from community institutions. **Tzedek** works closely with victims and survivors in order to prevent the long term harm that comes from child sexual abuse, by providing them with resources such as counselling and legal assistance as well as helping them through the reporting and legal process. The organisation aims to raise awareness within the community about child sexual abuse and educate them in order to work towards prevention.

There has been no evaluation of the organisation at this time, however the **Tzedek** is seen to be developing and growing, with current involvement with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

**Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse**

Established in 2013, the **Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (The Royal Commission)** is a statutory response to the allegations and instances of child sexual abuse within schools, churches, sports clubs and government organisations. The role of **The Royal Commission** is to find where institutions have failed to protect children from abuse and improve current and future laws, policies and practices. **The Royal Commission** was established to not only deal with individuals who perpetrated the abuse but also investigates the corruption and concealment that has stemmed within institutions that allowed the abuse to continue. The federal government has funded various services such as ASCA, **Tzedek**, and **MensLine** to provide counselling and support for victims who come forward in light of **The Royal Commission** as well as a number of research projects which have gone on to produce various research reports such as *The Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs for Pre-schoolers*.

The **Royal Commission** is still conducting hearings in relation to matters of child sexual assault; however recent research highlighting **The Royal Commission**’s progress has already been published. Middelton et al. (2014) state that by having a national inquiry the Australian society as a whole is able to acknowledge the true extent of institutional child sexual abuse and ensure that incidences are minimised by establishing more legislations and policy as well providing justice for the victims who have suffered. It also provides as a safe avenue for people to come forth and confront the abuse that occurred in order to begin their process of healing. The study further stated that the finding of such an inquiry may be applied more broadly into policy and good practice guidelines for future implications.

**Yaitya Tirramangkotti**

The service provided by **Yaitya Tirramangkotti** is of unique substance. Operating as part of the Children Youth and Family Services Department, **Yaitya Tirramangkotti** is a 24 hour child abuse report line situated within the Crisis Response and Child Abuse Services and assesses all child protection notifications in regards to Indigenous children. If the need for intervention is determined, the team recommends culturally appropriate methods to the District Centre. The basis for its formation is to take into account cultural factors and establish proper methods of intervention that promote the importance of identity and perception of the indigenous community.

**Yaitya Tirramangkotti** was established in 2002, in response to the increasing number of concerns in relation to Aboriginal children in child welfare and protection. Since then, it has been noted that the staff are highly efficient in ensuring that Aboriginal families are more frequently involved in caring for their child in ways that are culturally appropriate. It is reported to be an effective service that is efficient in catering to the needs of the Indigenous community. Staffed by Aboriginal family practitioners, the service provides culturally specific means of intervention.
Good practice in providing services: Victims of child abuse

Cottesloe Counselling Centre – Play Therapy

Play Therapy is a therapeutic initiative in which counsellors or therapists provide a child with a safe and accepting environment where they are able to act out any difficulties they may be experiencing. The program is available for children aged between two and 12 years and supports them in finding a way to express themselves, explore their situation and make sense of their experiences. Play therapy is seen to help in the social and emotional development of the child and enables them to express anything that they feel may be different or conflicting and come to an internal resolution. Play therapy involves different methods of play scenarios including acting out stories, playing dress ups, using puppets, playing with clay a well as role playing.

There are currently no evaluations of Play Therapy program at Cottesloe Counselling Centre. However research into play therapy provides mostly positive feedback in relation to play therapy as a form of intervention for children who have suffered from abuse. The provision of a safe environment where children are free to disclose issues promotes a therapeutic avenue for victims of child abuse to engage and communicate with professional practitioners and express themselves freely.

Little Seeds Big Trees – Art Therapy for Kids

Little Seeds Big Trees – Art Therapy for Kids is an organisation for young children, where they are able to express themselves through art. The program is not an art class but more of a means for children to articulate their feelings through a creative outlet. The program is designed to increase self-esteem, create a safe place for self-expression as well as encourage interaction and communication. Art therapy has recently gained an increase in recognition as a form of treatment for trauma disorders, and is being used frequently with children who are recovering from abuse as well as adults.

The organisation also offers Sandplay therapy; Sand play therapy is another form of therapy that has recently gained increased recognition as an effective method of treatment for children who suffer from some form of abuse. Allowing a child to freely create images into the sand is seen to reflect their subconscious, allowing them to freely communicate what’s going on inside their mind. In trusting this concept, issues that need addressing will end up inside the sand tray and allow for effective communication between child and therapist.

The organisation has not been evaluated since its establishment in 2011. However there is a great amount of evidence that promotes the use of both art therapy and sand play as being highly effective and appropriate as a method of response for children who have suffered from abuse. The therapeutic approach actively engages children encouraging participation and aids in the longer term recovery process by re-establishing concepts of trust and security.

Berry Street

A not-for-profit organisation established in 1877, Berry Street works with children and young persons who suffer as a result of growing up in families where violence, neglect, abuse, trauma and poverty are prevalent factors in their day to day lives. Their main focus is to support children, young people and families who endure complex issues as a result of their personal experiences. Berry Street provides services such as foster and kinship care, mentoring, counselling, support options for victims of family violence and many other support services that allow for a fairer, safer and more inclusive community.

There have been many evaluations conducted for Berry Street throughout the years, with most providing very positive feedback. Berry Street staff exceeds expectations with providing after hour on-call services and helping children and their families through court processes. It was found that Berry Street provides effective programs and services for children, young people and families who suffer from distress and significant harm. Their services contribute greatly to addressing the needs of children who have had adverse childhood experiences and their families.
Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (TF-CBT)

The therapy is designed for children that experience emotional or behavioural difficulties as a result of suffering from a traumatic incident. The therapy program is seen as a form of post intervention and acts as an arena for the child to be able to discuss their experience in a safe and protected environment. TF-CBT also consists of a range of programs for parents, which educate them on improving communication and parenting skills that allow them to provide optimum support for their child. The program usually consists of 12-18 weekly sessions and provides children with tools and techniques that allow for them to cope with their traumatic experiences and in consequence minimise emotional and behavioural disorders.

TF-CBT has been reviewed, studied and evaluated by many researchers over time in many different contexts. Studies that measure the effectiveness of the program on reducing the impact of post-traumatic stress in child victims of abuse promote the program as an effective tool. Deblinger et al (1996) reported on significantly fewer externalizing behaviours in children who participate in the therapy program with improvements in levels of depression and PTSD over a two year follow-up period. The program is also seen to be beneficial for parents, as the research also indicated an increase in the utilisation of the parenting skills that were acquired from the TF-CBT program.

Narrative Exposure Therapy for Traumatized Children and Adolescents (KidNET)

A therapeutic approach for children aged 7-16 years who have experienced violence, Narrative Exposure Therapy, particularly used for refugee children is a method by which a therapist works with a child who suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in creating a biographical narrative that focuses on the events experienced by the child. The therapist encourages the child in constructing the narrative usually with props such as a rope to represent the timeline and flowers to represent happy events and pebbles to mark unhappy ones. Narrative Exposure Therapy aims to explore the traumatic experiences faced by children and investigates the emotional, physiological, cognitive and behavioural reactions within the narrative process.

Narrative Exposure Therapy is highly recommended in the use of therapy for child refugees due to the fact that many of the traumas child victims in these situations face are complex and multiple. The therapeutic effect of the process allows children to reflect on their memories in a safe and secure environment. The treatment process allows for children to focus on their entire life whilst maintaining – or in some cases developing – a sense of personal identity throughout, as well as providing a way in which they are able to understand their experiences and work through it instead of escaping from it.

Ruf et al (2010) conducted a study on the impact of Narrative Exposure Therapy on traumatised children. The study promoted its use as it was found that children who underwent the therapy program experienced a significant improvement in their post-traumatic stress symptoms than that of the control group. These results were still present at the 12 month follow-up, indicating long term benefits of the treatment program.

India

Horse and Rider: A Journey Towards Freedom

Horse and Rider: A Journey Towards Freedom is a moving documentary directed by Ben Stamper in response to the alarming trend of children trafficked for sexual exploitation. The film focuses on the exploitation of minors and gives viewers first hand insight into the lives of real victims and their families on the reality and dangers of child sexual exploitation and trafficking. By introducing two survivors of sex trafficking, the aim of the film is to educate viewers on how survivors have experienced such trauma and worked through it, instilling hope for survivors to overcome their trauma.

The film highlights the work of Freedom Firm, a not for profit organisation based in India that is works towards rescuing, restoring, protecting and providing justice to victims of child sexual
exploitation. *Freedom Firm* consists of a team of undercover investigators who identify minors within India’s red light areas. In doing this they document the crime including the brothel keepers, pimps and traffickers and hand in their findings to the local police. From this information the girls are rescued. *Freedom Firm* also consists of practitioners from a range of professions, including counsellors, medical, education and training, who are all involved in the Regional Aftercare Program which is provided for the victims once they have been rescued. Lawyers are part of the extensive team, ensuring each case is monitored and the victim has a supportive network throughout the trial process. *Freedom Firm* is a leading advocate towards systemic change within India’s legal system. 

*Horse and Rider: A Journey Towards Freedom* promotes *Freedom Firm* as a universally recognised program, which has been identified by John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, *The Projection Project* as well as the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children as having best practice in child protection in highlighting the work to rescue and restore survivors of underage sex trafficking.

**USA**

*Children’s Hospital of the King’s Daughter*

The *Children’s Hospital of the King’s Daughters Child Abuse Program* uses pet therapy in assisting children who have been victims of child abuse as well as witnesses within court proceedings. This form of therapy has proven to make children less anxious prior to giving interviews and examination. There has been a rise in the use of pet therapy as its benefits have become more evident, particularly in relation to children and vulnerable persons in alleviating the level of anxiety and apprehension that occurs from being a victim and/or witness of crime. The *Children’s Hospital of the King’s Daughters* use trained service dogs to work with children who suffer from trauma and anxiety as a result of being abused. The service is known as the *Buddy Brigade* and has been evidently effective in calming nerves, lowering blood pressure and improving the rate of recovery in terms of post-traumatic stress. 

*Safe Horizons Child Advocacy Centres*

Based in New York, *Safe Horizons Child Advocacy Centres* combines practitioners from law enforcement, judicial, medical and social services in a single location to help children who are victims of abuse. *Safe Horizons* offers a range of services from crisis intervention, education and referrals, individual and group counselling, practical support for children during the investigation and trial phase as well as programs that address the long term effects of trauma. In addition to this, the organisation also raises awareness on issues regarding violence and abuse and the impact it has on children and families within the wider communities. In 2013, the four centres, located in New York provided services for 6622 children who had suffered from sexual and/or physical abuse. One of the main reasons *Safe Horizons Child Advocacy Centres* are considered so reputable is due to the collaborative approach it takes which ensures effective services are provided for victims in all stages of disclosure, investigation, prosecution and treatment. *Safe Horizons* are continuously gaining feedback from the clients, and although there are no external evaluations, the programs are constantly evolving and expanding in order to keep up with its credibility and its clients. *Safe Horizons* consists of a therapeutic and collaborative approach; ensuring victims gain confidence in themselves and work through the trauma they have experienced in a safe and comforting environment.
10. Complimentary services

The following services are included as complimentary services as they do not fall under the category of preventative or responsive services for any particular type of crime but focus more on the overall mental health and wellbeing of children and young adults. The services in this section have been included in the paper as they illustrate key features of good practice in their service delivery for children and young adults and aim to provide support throughout all stages. They are open and accessible to everyone and have demonstrated to be effective in the services they provide.

Headspace

Headspace is a national service that provides support and information for people aged between 12-25 years on issues relating to general health, mental health and counselling, education, relationships, employment and alcohol and other drug services. It acts as an outlet for young adults to express their concerns and freely talk about any issues they may be facing. Headspace is an early intervention service whereby it increases and educates young people on mental health issues and allows access to services to resolve any problems they may experience. With over 50 Headspace centres across the nation, headspace is accessible for free and includes a range of practitioners from different professional backgrounds. Service staff consists of doctors, psychologists, occupational therapists, nurses, youth workers, counsellors and drug and alcohol officers. They also provide services and programs within schools in regards to dealing with teen suicide which is funded by the Department of Health and Ageing.

By having many centres across the nation, headspace allows itself to be easily accessible not only by their walk-in policy but also through their online and over the phone services. ‘eheadspace’ is a good example of services being generation friendly and catering to the needs of their clients. There have been numerous evaluations conducted for headspace, all of which commend on the efficiency of services the organisation provides.

Our Watch

A social network campaign established to change the culture, behaviour and attitudes surrounding violence against women and children, Our Watch is mandated towards preventing all forms of violence. With educational programs such as the Respectful Relationships Education, Our Watch aims to teach young people how to build healthy relationships and tackles gender stereotypes and violent-supportive attitudes. Our Watch is part of the key initiatives that make up the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Children. Along with this initiative is the social marketing campaign The Line. Aimed towards young people aged between 12 and 20 years, The Line uses social media forums to engage young people in healthy forms of relationships by creating conversations that facilitate discussion on respecting others and appropriate behaviour within a social context.

The initiatives embedded in the Our Watch campaign are centred on evidence-based research. Our Watch has taken previous research into account and evaluated its effectiveness and in doing so created a campaign that works towards increasing awareness in reducing violence against women and children. Their online accessibility and celebrity endorsement keeps the campaign attractive and engaging towards their target audience.

Kids Helpline

Kids Helpline is a free phone and internet counselling service for people aged 5-25 years. The most popular service they run is the 24 hour phone counselling which is run by accredited counsellors who deal with issues ranging from relationship breakdowns to sexual abuse and mental health concerns. Web counselling is another service also available, running at specific times of the day it acts as a one on one interaction email service which is available seven days a week. The Kids Helpline service is an extension of BoysTown who is an advocate for disadvantaged youth.

Each year BoysTown and Kids Helpline conduct an annual report and overview to review the satisfaction levels of their clients as well as data
analysis of their progress throughout the year. The 2014\textsuperscript{49} report indicated positive feedback from the 635 children and young people who completed the survey and has shown that satisfaction levels are increasing each year. The program provides children with information and resources that address their immediate needs in a non-judgemental welcoming manner.

**11. Summary**

Throughout the research it is evident that child victimisation is an issue that is complex and insidious in nature. The experiences of child abuse are rarely isolated incidents and it is due to this co-occurrence of abuse that it becomes essential for services and programs to deliver therapeutic treatments that target not only the preventative stage and short term effects but also focus on the cumulative effects that occur throughout a child’s development and into their adult life as a result of trauma.

Increased public awareness in relation to child victimisation has seen a move towards delivering more preventative measures of safety and awareness amongst community as the correlation between early life experience and adult life outcomes has become more prevalent. These preventative measures work towards increasing awareness of safe behaviours amongst children and adults, strengthening community involvement and responsibility and demonstrates long term cost benefits across health, police, education, corrections, legal and welfare services. Although this increase in preventative services has become more popular over the years, responsive services are still a crucial and imperative service that is in great demand.

In light of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the community has seen the long term trauma and secrecy that victims of child abuse have dealt with all their lives. As a result, it becomes evident to see that treatment for victims with traumatic experiences is critical even years after the abuse has occurred.

Responding to the needs for child victims is not an easy task. Their needs are complex and multifaceted. Only with a cohesive and consistent evidence-based approach can we ensure that victims of child abuse and/or neglect receive the treatment and support that is necessary in order to overcome the trauma they have experienced. By having services comply with a good practice guideline that is uniform and consistent we can ensure that responses for child victimisation comply with national standards and work towards
an improved multi-agency approach that responds to the needs of child victims and allows for consistent evaluation, monitoring and practice for all cases that come forward to be investigated in order to prevent future harm.

The services and programs discussed in this report exemplify various levels of good practice that are essential when delivering treatment and prevention methods for victims of child abuse and/or neglect. Preventative programs and long term treatment are provided in safe and innovative ways that are customised to each individual as it has become overwhelmingly clear that each child's response to abuse and neglect differ. However one of the overarching factors that hinder the service delivery of majority of these programs is its longevity. Many of the programs and services are not long term and therefore evaluations and efficacy indicators are difficult to determine in relation to the long term benefits of the programs.

Notes

7 http://www.who.int/topics/child_abuse/en/


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34 http://www.burstingthebubble.com/about.htm

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