

CENTACARE FAMILY SERVICES

Responses to Discussion Paper 2017

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Financial Wellbeing and Capability Activity

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1. Strategies to improve the targeting of services

1.1 What impacts do you expect restricting eligibility criteria in the manner proposed above will have on your service?

- The mentioned eligibility potentially has minimal impact as our service delivery requires these stated criteria already:
 - people in receipt of an Australian Government social welfare allowance, pension or benefit,
 - people experiencing domestic and family violence , and
 - immigrants/non-citizens.
- For people who are waiting for their Centrelink payments to be established or change their payments ie, Newstart to Carers there is a period where they are without any income for up to 8 weeks. Restricted eligibility criteria may exclude them from being able to receive assistance from an Emergency Relief outlet.

1.2 What strategies can be employed to ensure that services are accessible for those who need them the most?

- Regular ER network meetings for all helping agencies, Centrelink and job service providers in town. This will allow for service providers to share information on services they are providing, days of operation, pool ideas for any trending or ongoing community needs, address any inappropriate referrals and strengthen linkages and pathways.
- Being aware of other agency referral processes to ensure appropriate referrals for clients.
- More funding in the community to allow all service providers to operate at higher levels.
- Continuing appropriate internal referrals to other of Centacare other services which increase support for clients and potentially assist them further in a holistic manner.
- Continuing to deliver service in a non-judgemental and compassionate manner.
- Ensuring confidentiality and privacy is maintained during consultations with other service providers and the referral process.

2. Strategies to increase service integration

2.1 What would help you to strengthen cooperation with other services (e.g. family support services and job network providers) in your community? What additional support would you need to achieve this?

- Centacare Family Services is funded to deliver Family Support Services, therefore these services are already accessible to ER clients.
- Regular ER network meetings.
- Develop engagement with job network providers.
- Increased funding to provide a paid position.

2.2 What effect will the requirement to formalise relationships with other organisations have on your service? How do you see these relationships working to maximise their effectiveness?

Positive

- The local ER Network providing regular, ongoing meetings and peer support.
- There is potential for beneficial impact to formalise such relationships. I see it working successfully if there is a neutral party who can navigate, hold, chair these meetings with a clear vision of intention of outcome for these meetings.
- Collaborative ideas for achieving outcomes for clients.

Negative

- All agencies, job network providers, Centrelink being willing to work together.
- All agencies being able to commit to attending meetings on a regular consistent basis.

2.3 Where is integration/collaboration of FWC microfinance services with other FWC services occurring across the country? Is there a way these relationships could be better supported?

N/A

2.4 What elements would need to be present to ensure a hub model is successful in your community? What additional support would you need to establish a hub in your community?

- Same elements that Centacare operate under as we already have a hub within our organisation ie, established referral process.
- Adequately trained staff to assist clients.
- Clear service delivery.
- Values.
- Mission Statement.
- Funding.

2.5 What elements and innovative practises would be particularly key in establishing a hub model in a rural and/or remote service delivery context?

- Discussion with any/all service providers already present in the community.
- Community discussion, engaging with the people who live in community.
- Researching what works well with other hubs and what hasn't worked so well.

2.6 How would Australian Government funding be used differently to better support integration of FWC services?

- Emergency relief assistance should remain accessible to support people in crisis.
- Not having exclusion criteria.

3. Strategies to support client outcomes

3.1 Engage in conversation with clients regarding employment status, future goals, encourage engagement with their job service providers.

- Continue to have local job opportunities available for clients to take in the ER waiting area.
- Establish relationship with job service providers in community.

3.2 How does your service currently deal with clients who present to your service on multiple occasions?

- We follow a procedure at Centacare which allows for clients to access 2 food vouchers per calendar year with the possibility of an emergency overnight food parcel if crisis occurs after the two visits. For clients who presented seeking assistance after these three visits we would appropriately refer them to another agency.
- Budgeting is offered; applications can be made for utilities grants; assistance with medical prescriptions may be given in addition to food vouchers.
- Depending on the assessment of the need for ongoing support that would assist clients to move forward positively more visits and/or vouchers may be offered.

At what point should additional support and requirements apply to repeat ER clients?

- Dependent on each client's situation. For someone who access' ER and uses all of their availability within a short time frame we would look at budgeting appointment, referral to financial counselling, utilising utility grants if appropriate, seeking out other options of assistance that are relevant to the client.

What form should this take?

- Appropriate referrals to other agencies.
- Forward booking for budgeting appointment.
- Supplying information to financial counselling hotline.

What barriers do you see in implementing these requirements with your clients?

- Clients not following through and attending future appointments.
- Not feeling equipped (financially, emotionally, mentally) to deal with their financial issues.

What support would you need to implement such a proposal?

- Funding for independent budgeting workshops.
- Funding to train and employ more financial counsellors in the community.

3.3 How can DSS better support early intervention and prevention opportunities?

- Provide more funding for the mentioned above, budgeting workshops and more financial counsellors.
- Provide engaging workshops in schools to target young people with budgeting, saving etc.

4. Strategies to build a strong workforce

4.1 Do ER and CFC/FC workers need to build capacity? If so, how might this be done?

- Yes. It would be mutually beneficial for both services to build capacity to strengthen the skills, abilities, processes and resources that we hold in order to assist our clients better.
- Both services to attend respective network meetings.

4.2 What 'tools' do you see as integral to the further development of the FWC services in Australia?

- Appropriate, free and accessible courses like the train the trainer courses mentioned in the discussion paper.
- Toolkits (online and hard copy) for FWC services to refer to and utilise with clients in appointments.

5. Strategies to strengthen evidence, improve practice and measure outcomes

5.1 What do you see as the key issues involved in evaluating the FWC activity?

- How to measure an outcome when providing Emergency Relief.
- The majority of the clients we service state food assistance is their main priority, once a food voucher has been issued that immediate need has been met and the outcome achieved.

5.2 What would you like to see as the main focus of the evaluation?

- Causes of poverty.
- Realistically how best to support and upskill consumers who have multigenerational reliance on Government support and/or low skillsets and low incomes.
- Ways in which we can develop and implement multi organisational networking to achieve better outcomes for clients.