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Foster and Kinship Care

Program Overview and Outcomes Framework

Mercy Community SEQ Limited



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Program Overview “Who with and why”

The Mercy Community (MC) Foster and Kinship Care (FKC) programs provide high quality care placements for children from birth up to 18 years old who are unable to live at home and are subject to Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (the Department) intervention.

Assistance to carers is a core feature of this program as the program aims to create a safe therapeutic environment for vulnerable children, where carers feel that they can seek help, sustain the caring role, and promote the best outcomes for children in their care.

This program is supported by several evidence-based principles that guide practice in delivery of services to children requiring foster care. The broad areas of activities include carer entry, assessment, monitoring, support, and exit; child placement; child therapeutic intervention and service evaluation activities.

MC's FKC programs provide individualised, wraparound care of children and young people, through one of three ‘intervention streams’ available in the FKC program, depending upon the child/young person’s individual placement needs. While MC provide these services in several regions, not all regions provide every intervention stream but a combination that best meets their region’s needs.

These intervention streams are:

1. **General Foster and Kinship Care** – provide placements for children and young people with moderate to high support needs.
2. **High Plus (HP)** – supply placements for children and young people who have been assessed as having a moderate to high level of support need.
3. **Intensive Foster and Kindship Care (IFKC)** – provide placements for children and young people who have been assessed as having a complex or extreme level of support needs.
4. **Intensive Intervention Placement Service (IIPS)** – Placements for children and young people with complex support needs.

People We Support

MC provides FKC services within the South-East Queensland area. Within in this service, the aim is to support foster and kinship parents and families to safely provide care for a child or young person within their home. The FKC program seeks to support these families to experience safety, connection, growth in capacity and wellbeing. The Child Protection system is a complex system and those within or engaging with the system can have negative experiences of feeling undervalued or of less importance. While this is not the aim of the system, it is a lived experience of the people (both young people, families, and foster families) we support.

The FKC program supports children and young people who are subject to statutory orders. These children and young people have been removed from their families due to experiencing neglect and/or abuse. To best support the children and young people to engage in healing from past experiences and experience safe and nurturing environments in the future it has been decided that a family-based placement is the best option. Often these placements have an overarching plan for reunification, long-term placements, or permanent care. While this overarching plan is generally set when the child enters the care of Child Safety, these plans can change and develop as the needs of the child and the capacity of their family grown and change.

Alongside supporting children and young people, the FKC program supports carers and families to care for the children placed with them. Foster carers are people who have chosen to volunteer their family to care and nurture a child and/or young person in need, while a kinship carer can be relative of or person who has a significant existing role within a child’s life, who steps forward to care for the child.

MC support children/young people and carers (foster or kin) from all cultures and backgrounds. With all family dynamics, including single carers, couples, gender diverse carers, carers with biological child or without biological children, grandparents, and those with diverse identities being openly accepted and supported.

While the reasons for volunteering as a foster or kinship carer are very different and individualised, often people with a lived experience of systems abuse or challenging family dynamics step forward to support children and young people in need, due to their personal understanding of the child's experience and feeling able to support them due to their own experiences.

Foster and kinship families experience the same challenges all families experience, such as multiple parents working, cost of living challenges, however, are still wanting to support children and young people in need. This dynamic often points to the type of support that families need to sustain a placement for the foster young person.

Our 'Why'

The FKC team find their 'why' in ensuring that the child is heard, and their voice acknowledged and responded to appropriately; the teams want to focus on supporting the carer to ensure the best care of the child and advocating for the child's needs. Through their actions and interactions, the FKC team aim to develop positive relationship with the carers and the young people who may not have many trusted adults on whom to rely. By supporting the carer and child with this positive relationship, the young person is provided with support to buffer the negative impacts of neglect and abuse and challenges that come along with engaging within the child protection system.

The FKC team deeply acknowledges that the child protection system is complex and at times very challenging to understand and navigate. It is in supporting carers to successfully engage with the system to best meet the child's needs and advocate for the child's voice to be heard, that a key 'why' of the program is found. A common challenge experienced within this system is instability. The FKC team often find professional success when supporting the whole family (child and carer) to experience stability in an ever-changing system.

The FKC team generally play a support and guiding role within the program, it is their ability to witness the changes and growths that is a driving aspect the program. Being able to witness a child's voice being heard and actions taken as a result or observing the little wins and positive outcomes due to children experiencing safe and nurturing environments.

Working in any aspect of the child protection system is challenging, however being involved in creative problem solving, finding new opportunities, and engaging in the bigger picture and supporting people to not be passive within the system but find advantage and strength in the supports around them are all buffering experiences that continue to keep the team finding meaning in their work.

Program Specific Outcomes Framework “What happens”

MC has developed an organisational Outcomes Framework that is applied to all MC programs, and reflects their individualised outcomes for those supported by MC.

Within Families and Young People (FYP), the MC Outcomes Framework focuses on six (6) domains, with four (4) being focused on outcomes for people we support, these are, Safety, Capacity, Connectedness, and Wellbeing. The remaining two (2) domains are related to organisational outcomes, being Satisfaction and Service Led.

Each FYP program has developed individualised outcomes that speak directly to the purpose of the program and the needs of the people supported. Outcomes in this context reflect the goal of the program, *where we hope to finish*. By *starting with the end in mind*, we are better equipped to plan the individuals or family's pathway out of crisis and into resilience. When working with individuals or families in crisis, it is critical to understand where we are heading, so we can support their journey out of crisis in an individualised and proactive way.

Outcomes Map



Outcomes Indicators

Outcome	Immediate Indicators	Intermediate Indicators	End of Program Indicators
Safety	Carers have increased knowledge of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The unique needs of the young person they are caring Childhood development milestones The young person's capacities and strengths Possible support networks that can assist them 	Carers have increased skills to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying and addressing the young persons' safety needs Targeting needed milestone development Engaging the young person's capacities and strengths Accessing relevant and meaningful support networks 	Carers provide the young person with living in an environment that provides physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual safety for their unique needs Young Person experiences placement stability The Carers have a relevant understanding of the safety needs of the young person in their care
Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The young person's family and cultural history Of trauma recovery journey process Personal self-care to support their own wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage the young person's family and cultural history Supporting trauma recovery Managing their self-care and wellbeing 	Carers support the young person the engaged in educational/vocational /employment/living skills goal setting and participation The Carers understand childhood developmental milestones The Carers can meet the potential needs of the young person, including an understanding of trauma
Connectedness	Young people will have increased knowledge of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The experience of a stable placement How they can set goals and participate in education/ vocation/ employment or skill building 	Young people have increased skills to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Express their needs safely within the placement Setting and engaging in education/ vocation/ employment or life skills goals Engaging in their community of care 	Carers is able to support the young person in developing community of care The carer household have connection with support networks The Carer is engaged in exploring and developing the young person's connection with culture and family
Wellbeing			Carer is able to support the young person in progressing

Outcome	Immediate Indicators	Intermediate Indicators	End of Program Indicators
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their current community of care • How to manage their emotions while engaging in trauma recovery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledging personal trauma and a state of recovery 	<p>through their individual ongoing journey of trauma recovery</p> <p>The Carer is supported to meet the health needs of the young person</p> <p>The carer household have enhanced well-being</p>

Stages of Change “When it happens”

Stages of Change is how the desired change is expected to happen. It is focused on mapping out what a program or change initiative does (its activities or interventions) and how these lead to desired goals being achieved. This process of understanding the Stages of Change within each individual program, supports the achievement of the Program Outcomes. Though understanding the expected Stages of Change, those working within the program can understand where the person they are supporting are ‘at’ in their progress and target their ongoing support in the best way to continue to growth and meaningful change.

These four (4) practice domains of the MC Outcome Framework work together to create the theory of change.



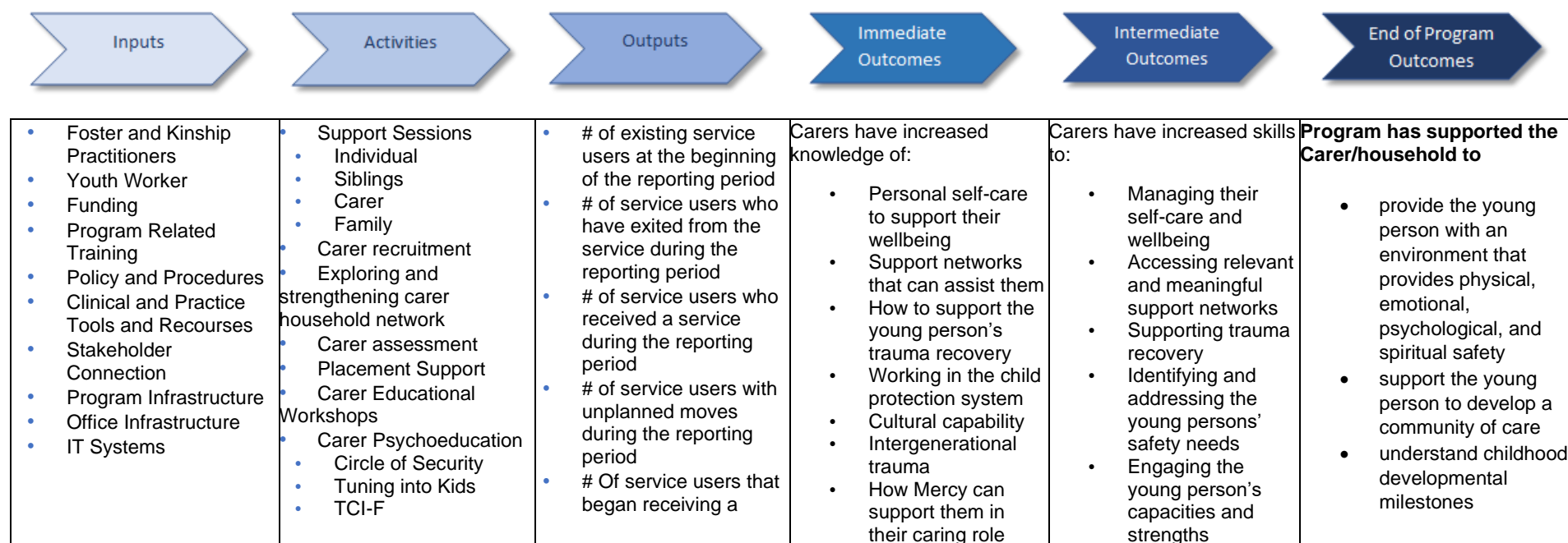
Program Logic “What we do”

A Program Logic provides a visual representation of how a program is designed to work. The Program Logic displays the resources and activities that make up the program and the changes/outcomes that are expected to occur as a result from them. Program Logics are also tools of evaluation, helping the program check its use of resources and the effectiveness of the activities in reaching the desired outcome. In this way, Program Logics can be fluid documents, that are updated and improved on as the program evolves and grows. By understanding the Program Logic, you are better able to ensure your inputs and activities are working towards to desired outcomes and have a good idea of what ‘should’ be happening along that journey.

General Foster and Kinship Care Program Logic

Objective: The FKC Program improves the wellbeing and lived experience of the children and carers by creating a community of care. Our program ensures a safe, secure and nurturing home environment and community building for children and young people in out-of-home care. The program achieves this through providing support to the carers to continue to meet the ongoing needs of the children and young people. The program aims to support the achievement of long-term goals set by Child Safety and the family.

Situation/Problem Statement: The Child Protection system requires a range of safe options to support children and young people who have been removed from their families. Research shows that a family-based placements are the desirable option for most children. This is challenged by a reduced number of available foster and kinship family able to support the growing placement needs of children and young people in needs. Within the population of children and young people who are removed from families, there is an over representation of First Nations young people. This over representation need is currently not being mirrored in the population of foster and kinship families within in the child protection system.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing Up Great Kids • Stakeholder Meeting and Networking • Assessment and Collaborative Goal Setting • Referral Pathway • Advocacy and Service Connection • Practical Support (skill building or crisis support) • Outreach or Office based appointments • Support or advocacy skill building to attend medical and health appointments • Carer peer and support networking events • Service promotion and community awareness events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • service during the reporting period • # Of female service users • # Of male service users • # Of service users over 15 years old • # Of service users identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island • # Of service users identifying as being from Culturally and Linguistically diverse background • Significant of factors have affected the quality of services delivery during the reporting period • # Of current service users with Placement Agreements • # Of service users with Education Support Plans • # Of service users with Cultural Support Plans • # Of service users receiving therapeutic or behaviour support from Evolve Interagency Service during the reporting period • # Of service users over 15 years old with Transition from Care Plans that received a service during the reporting period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unique needs of the young person for whom they are caring • The young person's family and cultural history <p>Young people will have increased knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The experience of a stable placement • How they can set goals and participate in education/ vocation/ employment or skill building • Their current community of care • How to manage their emotions while engaging in trauma recovery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage the young person's family and cultural history <p>Young people have increased skills to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express their needs safely within the placement • Setting and engaging in education/ vocation/ employment or life skills goals • Engaging in their community of care • Acknowledging personal trauma and a state of recovery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet the needs of the young person, including an understanding of trauma • explore and develop the young person's connection with culture and family • support the young person in progressing through their individual ongoing journey of trauma recovery • support the young person the engaged in educational/vocational /employment/living skills goal setting and participation • meet the health needs of the young person <p>Program has supported the Carers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have enhanced well-being • have connection with carer support networks <p>Program has supported the Young Person to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experience stability and is living in an environment that provides physical, emotional,
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # Of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander service users placed with an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person during the reporting period • # Of carers during the reporting period • # Of placement nights – the spaces occupied by individual service users who are provided with a service 			<p>psychological, and spiritual safety for their unique needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progress in their ongoing journey of trauma recovery • develop a community of care • be engaged in educational/vocational /employment/living skills goal setting and participation • Have their health needs met
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Theory of Change Statement: This program aims to enhance whole family wellbeing, safety, capacity, community connection and long-term placement stabilisation. We will achieve this by taking an evidenced-based approach to strengthen carer competencies and confidence. In this program we acknowledged that all four elements of the MC Outcomes Framework (Safety, Capacity, Wellbeing and Connectedness) are critical for enacting change and growth. Using these domains, this program applies a Theory of Change that focus on increasing carer's social connections, knowledge and practical skills and access to services.

Assumptions:

- Carers are willing to engage with Mercy Community workers
- Young people and carers engage with the whole program
- Referrals to the program are appropriate and able to be supported by the program
- Community partners and services are available
- Community partners can accept out-bound referrals for potential ongoing support
- Environments are safe for all young people, carers and staff to engage
- Ongoing program funding from funding body
- Transition planning is actively underway
- Recruitment and retention of specialty staff
- Recruitment and retention of carer
- Stakeholders and family are collaborative in the approach and design of the program

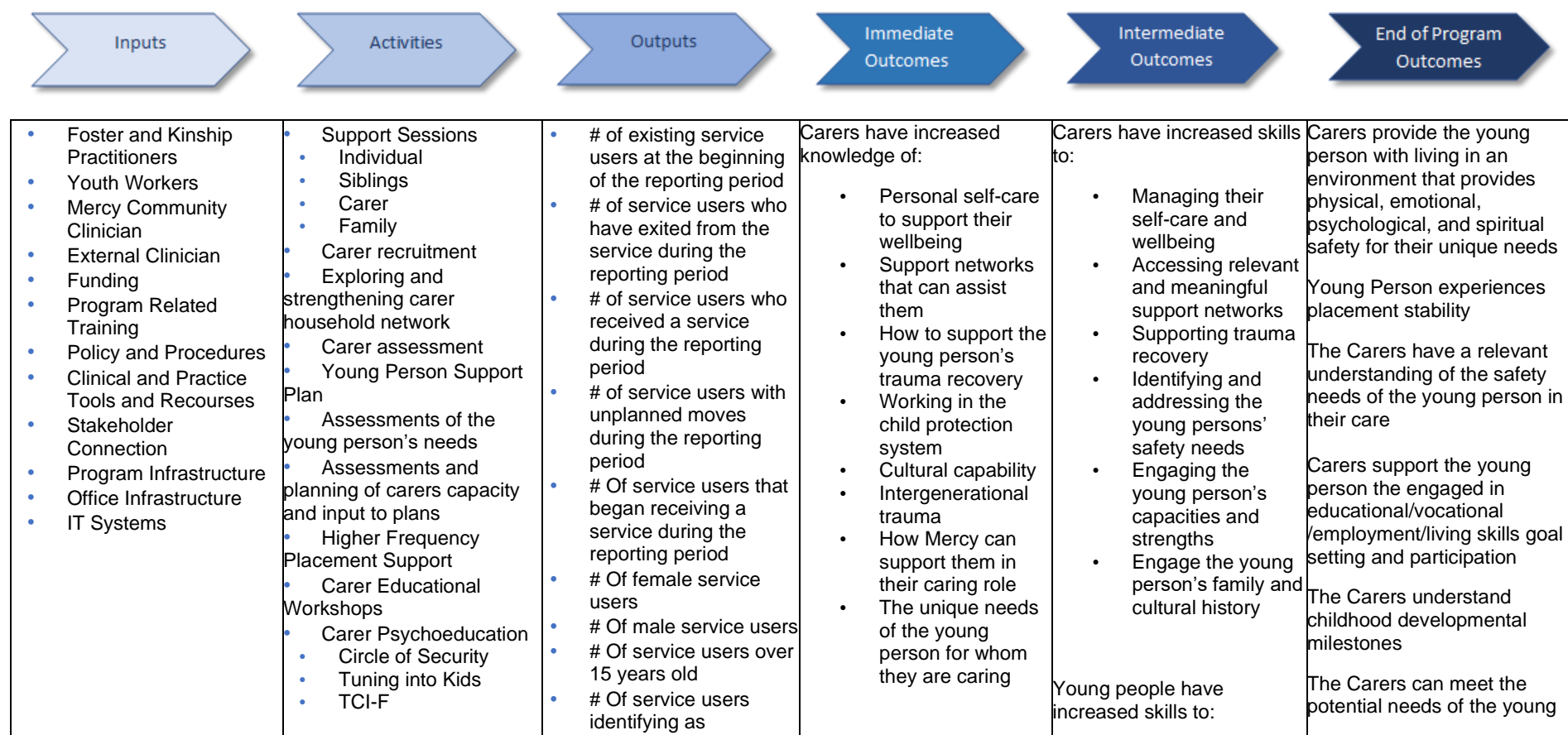
External Factors:

- Other local community connections and services are willing and able to engage the young people and carers
- Other factors affect Child Safety assessment resulting in the young person or carer not completing the program
- Unexpected Covid-19 and natural disasters effects on providing community visiting services
- Significant pressure that the whole community system is under
- Location impacts workforce availability
- Location impacts carer availability

MC High Plus Foster and Kinship Care Program Logic

Objective: The High Plus FKC Program provide safe secure and nurturing home environment for children and young people in out-of-home care. The program achieves this through providing increased targeted support to the carers and the children and young people to continue to meet the ongoing needs of the family. While supporting the safe and nurturing home environment, the program aims to support the achievement of long-term goals set by Child Safety and the family.

Situation/Problem Statement: The Child Protection system requires a range of safe options to support children and young people who have been removed from their families. Research shows that a family-based placements are the desirable option for most children. This is challenged by a reduced number of available foster and kinship family able to support the growing placement needs of children and young people in needs. Within the population of children and young people who are removed from families, there is an over representation of First Nations young people. This over representation need is currently not being mirrored in the population of foster and kinship families within in the child protection system.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing Up Great Kids • Stakeholder Meeting and Networking • Assessment and Collaborative Goal Setting • Referral Pathway • Advocacy and Service Connection • Practical Support (skill building or crisis support) • Outreach or Office based appointments • Support or advocacy skill building to attend medical and health appointments • Carer peer and support networking events • Service promotion and community awareness events • Consultation with Clinician 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island • # Of service users identifying as being from Culturally and Linguistically diverse background • Significant of factors have affected the quality of services delivery during the reporting period • # Of current service users with Placement Agreements • # Of service users with Education Support Plans • # Of service users with Cultural Support Plans • # Of service users receiving therapeutic or behaviour support from Evolve Interagency Service during the reporting period • # Of service users over 15 years old with Transition from Care Plans that received a service during the reporting period • # Of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander service users placed with an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person during the reporting period • # Of carers during the reporting period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The young person's family and cultural history <p>Young people will have increased knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The experience of a stable placement • How they can set goals and participate in education/ vocation/ employment or skill building • Their current community of care • How to manage their emotions while engaging in trauma recovery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express their needs safely within the placement • Setting and engaging in education/ vocation/ employment or life skills goals • Engaging in their community of care • Acknowledging personal trauma and a state of recovery 	<p>person, including an understanding of trauma</p> <p>Carers is able to support the young person in developing community of care</p> <p>The carer household have connection with support networks</p> <p>The Carer is engaged in exploring and developing the young person's connection with culture and family</p> <p>Carer is able to support the young person in progressing through their individual ongoing journey of trauma recovery</p> <p>The Carer is supported to meet the health needs of the young person</p> <p>The carer household have enhanced well-being</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # Of placement nights – the spaces occupied by individual service users who are provided with a service 			
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Theory of Change Statement: This program aims to enhance whole family wellbeing, safety, community connection and support and returning stability to the placement. We will achieve this by taking an evidenced-based approach to strengthen carer competencies and confidence and applying targeted interventions for both carer and young person. In this program we acknowledged that all four elements of the MC Outcomes Framework (Safety, Capacity, Wellbeing and Connectedness) are critical for enacting change and growth. Using these domains, this program applies a Theory of Change that focus on increasing carer's social connections, access to services and implementing targeted support for the families unique needs.

Assumptions:

- Carers are willing to engage with Mercy Community workers
- Young people and carers engage with the whole program
- Young people have a higher support need in comparison to carer capacity
- The support need is resolvable in a short intervention
- Referrals to the program are appropriate and able to be supported by the program
- Community partners and services are available
- Community partners can accept out-bound referrals for potential ongoing support
- Environments are safe for all young people, carers and staff to engage
- Ongoing program funding from funding body
- Transition planning is actively underway
- Recruitment and retention of specialty staff
- Stakeholders and family are collaborative in the approach and design of the program

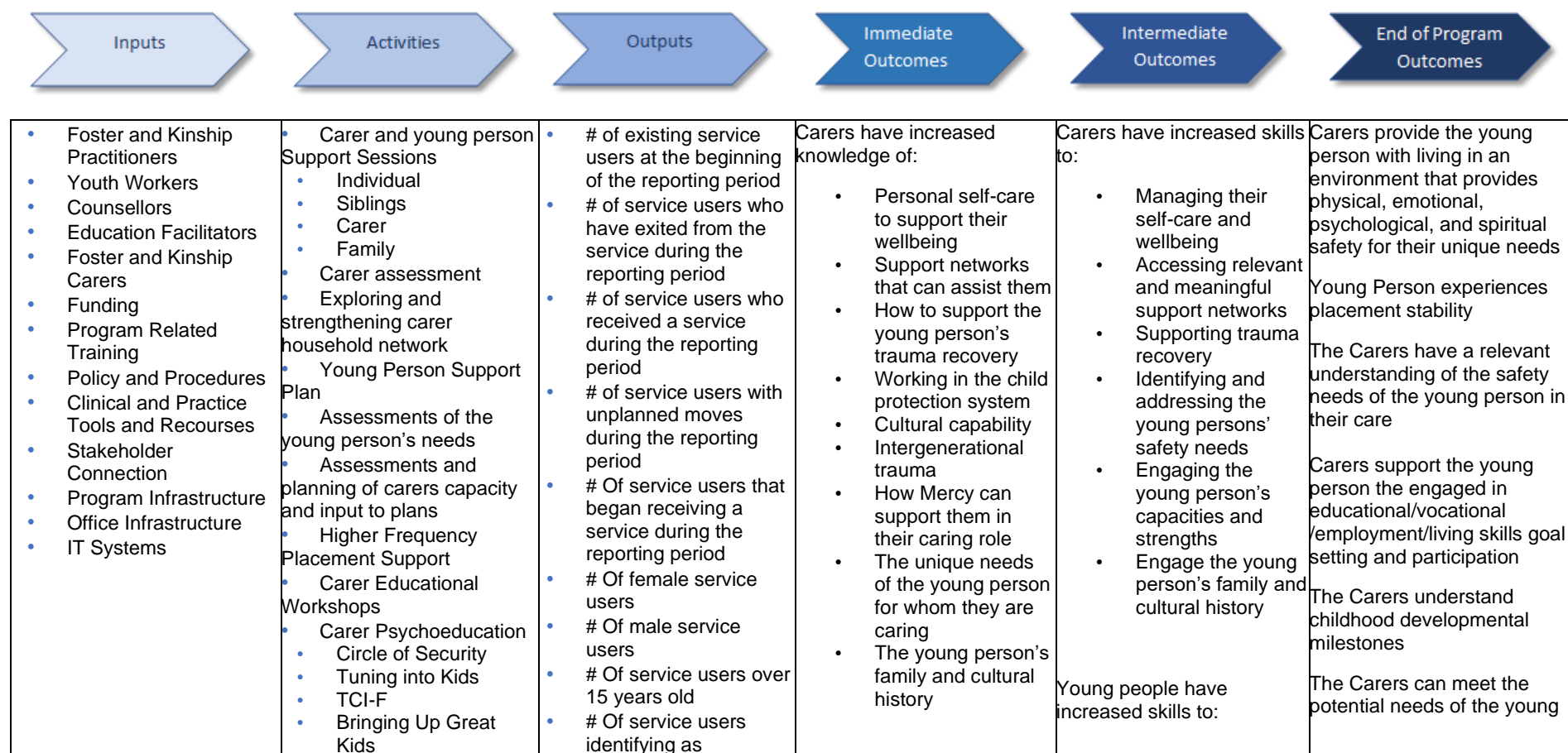
External Factors:

- Other local community connections and services are willing and able to engage the young people and carers
- Other factors affect Child Safety assessment resulting in the young person or carer not completing the program
- Unexpected Covid-19 and natural disasters effects on providing community visiting services
- Significant pressure that the whole community system is under
- Location impacts workforce availability
- Location impacts carer availability

MC Intensive/Intensive Intervention Placement Service Foster and Kinship Care Program Logic

Objective: The Intensive/ Intensive Intervention Placement FKC Program provide safe secure and nurturing home environment for children and young people in out-of-home care. The program achieves this through providing an intensive intervention support to the carers and the children and young people to continue to meet the ongoing needs of the family. While supporting the safe and nurturing home environment, the program aims to support the achievement of long-term goals set by Child Safety and the family.

Situation/Problem Statement: The Child Protection system requires a range of safe options to support children and young people who have been removed from their families. Research shows that a family-based placements are the desirable option for most children. This is challenged by a reduced number of available foster and kinship family able to support the growing placement needs of children and young people in needs. Within the population of children and young people who are removed from families, there is an over representation of First Nations young people. This over representation need is currently not being mirrored in the population of foster and kinship families within in the child protection system.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder Meeting and Networking Assessment and Collaborative Goal Setting Referral Pathway Advocacy and Service Connection Practical Support (skill building or crisis support) Outreach or Office based appointments Support or advocacy skill building to attend medical and health appointments Carer peer and support networking events Service promotion and community awareness events Consultation with Clinician Education and Vocational Support Worker 	<p>Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # Of service users identifying as being from Culturally and Linguistically diverse background Significant of factors have affected the quality of services delivery during the reporting period # Of current service users with Placement Agreements # Of service users with Education Support Plans # Of service users with Cultural Support Plans # Of service users receiving therapeutic or behaviour support from Evolve Interagency Service during the reporting period # Of service users over 15 years old with Transition from Care Plans that received a service during the reporting period # Of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander service users placed with an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person during the reporting period # Of carers during the reporting period 	<p>Young people will have increased knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The experience of a stable placement How they can set goals and participate in education/ vocation/ employment or skill building Their current community of care How to manage their emotions while engaging in trauma recovery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Express their needs safely within the placement Setting and engaging in education/ vocation/ employment or life skills goals Engaging in their community of care Acknowledging personal trauma and a state of recovery 	<p>person, including an understanding of trauma</p> <p>Carers is able to support the young person in developing community of care</p> <p>The carer household have connection with support networks</p> <p>The Carer is engaged in exploring and developing the young person's connection with culture and family</p> <p>Carer is able to support the young person in progressing through their individual ongoing journey of trauma recovery</p> <p>The Carer is supported to meet the health needs of the young person</p> <p>The carer household have enhanced well-being</p>
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Theory of Change Statement: This program aims to enhance whole family wellbeing, safety, capacity, community connection and support and returning stability to the placement. We will achieve this by taking an evidenced-based approach to strengthen carer competencies and confidence and applying targeted interventions for both the carer and young person. In this program we acknowledged that all four elements of the MC Outcomes Framework (Safety, Capacity, Wellbeing and Connectedness) are critical for enacting change and growth. Using these domains, this program applies a Theory of Change that focus on increasing carer's social connections, access to services and implementing targeted support for the families unique needs.

Assumptions:

- Carers are willing to engage with Mercy Community workers
- Young people and carers engage with the whole program
- Young people have a complex/extreme support needs in comparison to carer capacity
- Referrals to the program are appropriate and able to be supported by the program
- Community partners and services are available
- Community partners can accept out-bound referrals for potential ongoing support
- Environments are safe for all young people, carers and staff to engage
- Ongoing program funding from funding body
- Transition planning is actively underway
- Recruitment and retention of specialty staff
- Stakeholders and family are collaborative in the approach and design of the program

External Factors:

- Other local community connections and services are willing and able to engage the young people and carers
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Learning Pathways and Practice Papers “Why it works”

Professional development and continuous improvement are critical components of the mercy Community culture. Due to the unique design and function of each program, it is important for new staff to understand which information they should focus on as key during their induction and first 6 months. The following table is a program specific outline of recommended aspects of Policy and Procedures and Practice Papers to review in a timeline of the first six months of working within the program.

Month	Practice Papers
One	PP Therapeutic Alliance PP Risk Assessment PP Responding to Disclosures
Two	PP Collaborative Assessment Planning PP Working in a Child Protection Context
Three	PP Learning and Teaching Regulation PP Attachment Theory
Four	PP Attuned Engagement PP Attachment Theory – Cultural Perspective
Five	PP Therapeutic Goal based Incentive PP Motivational Interviewing
Six	PP Producing Quality Documentation PP Therapeutic Planning for Trauma Recovery and Resilience Building
Ongoing Development	