

BRISBANE
YOUTH
SERVICE

NEW FUTURES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



BYS Youth Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence Practice Framework Snapshot

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Acknowledgements

Brisbane Youth Service (BYS) respectfully acknowledges the Turrbal and Jagera people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands where BYS operates. We pay respect to their Elders past and present, lores, customs, and creation spirits. BYS acknowledges and celebrates the important role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people play within BYS and the community.

We would like to thank the young people who contributed their lived expertise to the BYS Youth Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence Framework. Their willingness to share their knowledge has been integral to the construction of building a framework which works for young people accessing BYS support. We would also like to thank Dr Katie Hail-Jares for contributing her expertise in reviewing the final version of this framework. Finally, we would also like to thank the BYS workers who volunteered their practice wisdom, time, and support to this framework. Without your efforts, this work would not have been possible.

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Brisbane Youth Service. (2025). Youth Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence Practice Framework Snapshot.

The photos in this report are young actors and BYS workers depicting real scenarios we experience day to day.



WHY NOW: THE CASE FOR URGENT ACTION

This snapshot introduces the **BYS Youth Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence Practice Framework**. The Framework will guide practice at **BYS** in supporting children and young people aged **12 to 25** who are impacted by domestic, family, and sexual violence (DFS¹SV) while experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

This work platforms the voices and contributions of young people supported by **BYS** with the hope of inspiring others to include young people as part of the solution when developing practice frameworks for DFS¹SV support.

BYS provides DFS¹SV support to young people aged between **12 and 25** who are homeless or at risk of homelessness because:



Young people aged between 15 and 24 make up **23%** of all people experiencing homelessness.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021.



DFS¹SV is one of the key drivers of homelessness for young people and their children.

1 in 4 specialist housing service clients in 2023-24 experiencing DFS¹SV were children and young people.

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2024.



In 2023-24, **75%** of young people accessing support at **BYS** reported experiencing past family violence and **46%** reported experiencing past relationship violence. These proportions have remained stable over the past five years.



More than half (58%) of young people who exited **BYS** services in 2023-24 reported that their violence situation was a bit or much better after coming to **BYS**.

Source: Brisbane Youth Service Annual Report, 2024.

Why a Youth DFS¹SV Framework?

The **BYS Youth DFS¹SV Practice Framework is needed because:**

- youth services like **BYS** are often the first and main point of contact for young people impacted by DFS¹SV while experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- young people impacted by DFS¹SV and homelessness have unique support needs and require tailored responses
- youth workers need core DFS¹SV competencies and an authorising environment to provide effective support
- few frameworks incorporate young people's voices into how they would like to receive support for DFS¹SV

HOW DOES DFSV LOOK DIFFERENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING OR AT RISK OF **HOMELESSNESS?**



Young People Want Wraparound Support

Young people impacted by DFSV while experiencing or at risk of homelessness have distinct needs that are different from adults. Their developmental stage, journey of individuation, and limited access to resources and natural supports mean **young people require holistic, ongoing support**. For example, young people experiencing DFSV who connect with BYS also receive support for physical and mental health struggles, challenges with substances, and access to safe and stable housing.

Youth services are uniquely positioned to provide ongoing, wraparound support that addresses the full spectrum of young people's needs. As young people's brains are still developing, behaviour change is more likely when appropriate interventions are provided. Their life trajectories remain adaptable and responsive to support.

Young people's support needs are further shaped by diverse identities and experiences, which may overlap in complex and cumulative ways. For example:

- DFSV is a gendered issue rooted in structural power imbalances, disproportionately affecting **young women**.
- **Young parents**, particularly young mums, face unique challenges relating to their safety and the safety of their children. This includes navigation of systems such as Child Safety and distrust of systems.
- Dependency and attachment trauma for young people with **violence in their family of origin** can make it difficult to acknowledge experiences of violence and, in turn, to seek, accept, and access support.
- DFSV may look different for young people who identify as **LGBTQIAP+SB**, including experiences of parental violence that are directly related to a young person's sexuality or gender diversity.

THERE NEEDS TO BE MORE QUEER SPACES, QUEER GROUPS. THERE'S NOTHING ELSE OUT THERE. SOMETIMES IT'S A WOMAN SPACE, BUT YOU DON'T WANT TO BE IN A SPACE THAT'S NOT FOR YOU.

— LGBTQIAP+SB young person

- **First Nations young people** deserve culturally safe support for their experiences, which may include access to identified workers and co-designed services for DFSV.
- It is problematic to construct young people experiencing violence and **young people using violence** as distinct groups. Young people may use violence in a variety of complex contexts that require their own specialised responses. Young people who used violence before BYS support have shared that they have since overcome a belief that they were unable to change.

OVER THE YEARS I FELT MORE ANGRY. I WASN'T GETTING ANY HELP. I WAS A CHILD BEING TOLD THAT I'M GOING TO BE VIOLENT WHEN I'M OLDER.

— Young person who had used violence prior to BYS support

Violence is Normalised

Research conducted in 2022 found that many young people supported by BYS had normalised their experiences of violence, and often held a belief that they did not feel entitled to safety.

When young people normalise violence, it means they are less likely to recognise their own experiences of violence and/or use of violence and may not seek DFSV support.

Instead, young people who are homeless and impacted by DFSV tend to seek help for other concerns, such as accommodation or mental health, at youth-specific and non-DFSV organisations. For example, at BYS, despite the high proportions of young people who have experienced past family violence and past relationship violence, housing remains the most common support priority for young people seeking help.

THE YOUNG PERSON DOESN'T KNOW
WHAT SERVICES TO GO TO.
I JUST KNEW THAT BYS WAS FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE AND THAT IT WAS
A COOL PLACE.

— First Nations young person

These and other barriers to help-seeking mean that young people's journeys into DFSV support are often initiated through opportunistic care. For example, astute and careful inquiry when a young person describes a situation that made them feel uncomfortable or unsafe. These conversations are only possible once a healthy, trusting relationship has been formed between the worker and the young person.

Crisis Support is Not the Whole Picture

Recovery is an important and understudied part of a young person's DFSV journey. While children and young people exposed to DFSV are now recognised as victims in their own right, access to recovery in their early development is largely unavailable. Without appropriate support during the healing and recovery phase, children and young people may be further impacted by DFSV in the future.

Much like crisis support for DFSV, healing and recovery initiatives need to be designed with and tailored to young people and their children, including when children are exposed to DFSV.

THE RECOVERY PHASE IS THE MOST
IMPORTANT. THIS IS WHERE THE
YOUNG PERSON MIGHT TRY TO GO
BACK TO THE BEGINNING. HERE
THEY'RE MOST AT RISK OF FALLING
BACK INTO THE CYCLE [...] YOU'RE NOT
TAUGHT HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF.
IT'S HARDER IF YOU'RE DOING
IT ON YOUR OWN.

— Young person with violence in
their family of origin

SO, WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT IT?

Recognising that young people and their children impacted by DFSV and homelessness have unique support needs, BYS developed the Youth Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence Practice Framework.



Engaging Practice Wisdom

We held **five** practitioner-directed consultations across BYS service delivery to understand:

- their experiences working with young people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and impacted by DFSV
- what current practices best supported young people
- what should be included in a Youth DFSV Practice Framework to support their practice



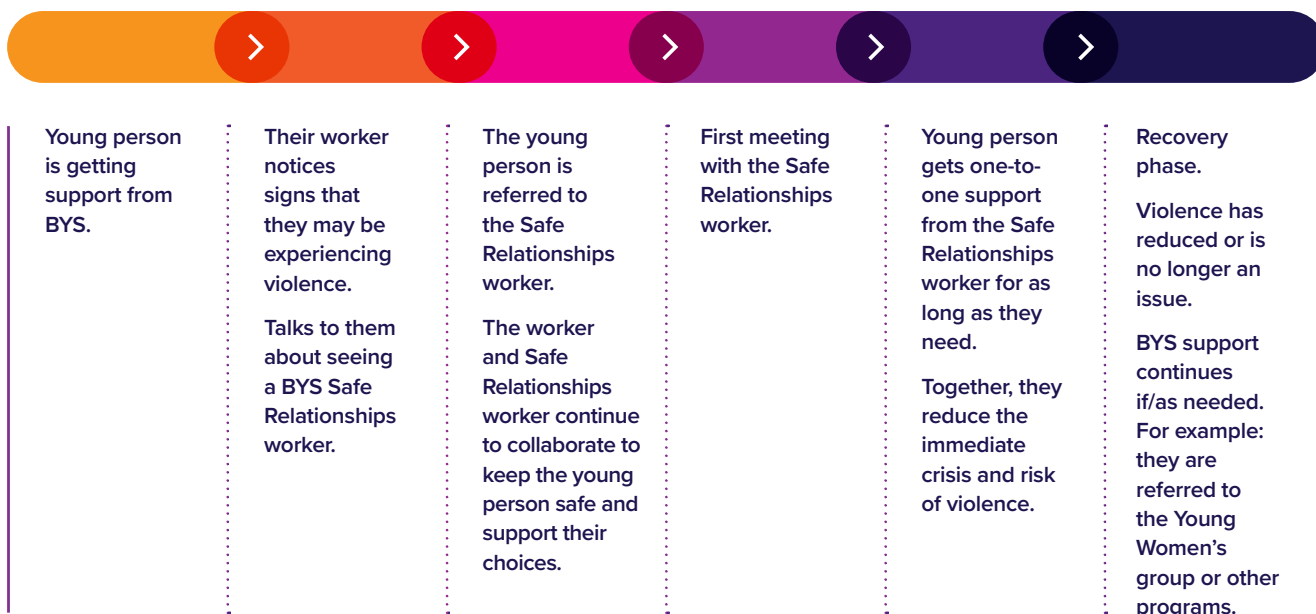
Young People's Voices

We facilitated over **15 hours** of discussions with young people.

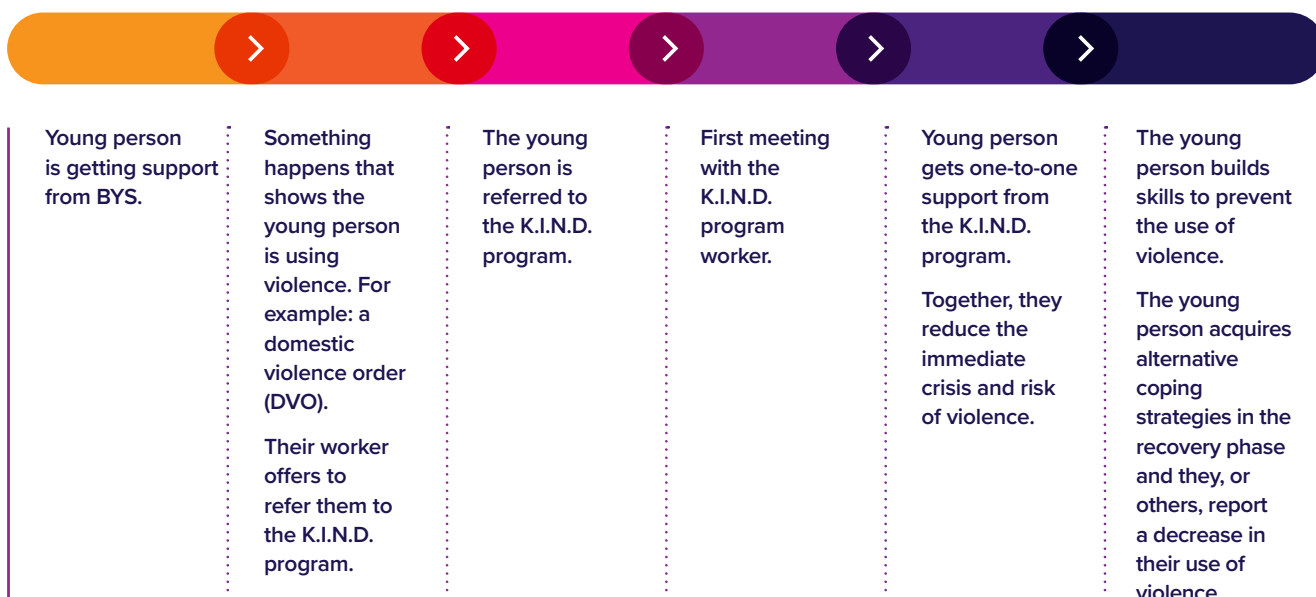
10 one-on-one and group sessions covering the journey from accessing non-DFSV support through to DFSV support and into healing and recovery with:

- young women
- young mums
- young people with violence in their family of origin
- LGBTQIAP+ young people
- First Nations young people
- young people using violence

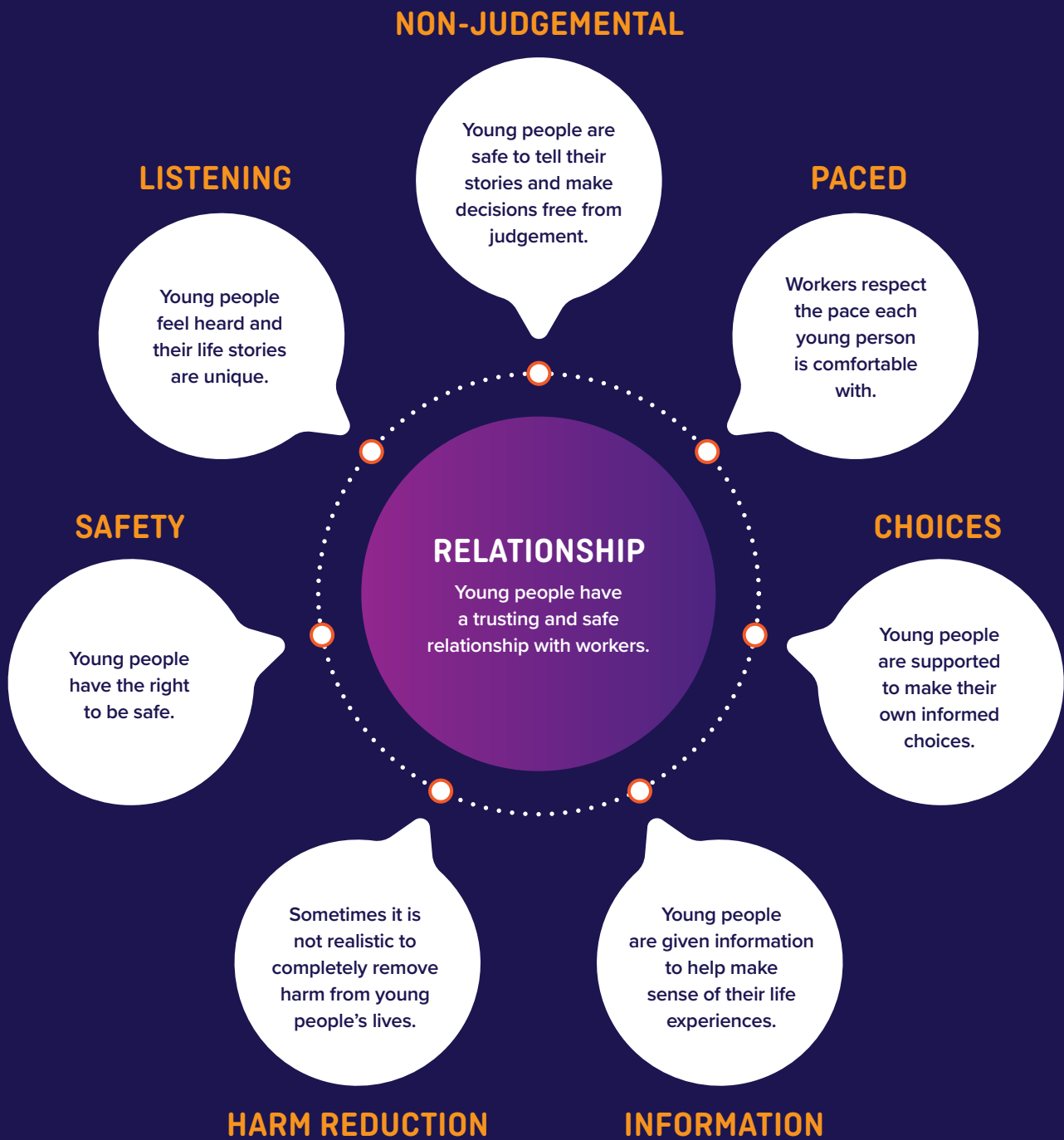
Safe Relationships Support Journey



K.I.N.D. Program Support Journey



GUIDING PRINCIPLES



FRAMEWORK SNAPSHOT

01 RELATIONSHIP

At the heart of the BYS Youth DFSV Practice Framework is the relationship between the worker and the young person. Good DFSV practice is built on authentic professional relationships with young people that model boundaries and open communication. For many young people impacted by DFSV, this may be their first opportunity to disclose and build a positive relationship with an adult.

THEY'RE FEELING ALONE,
TRAUMATISED, AND SOMEONE
SHOWS THEM SUPPORT. THE SOCIAL
WORKER NEEDS TO MAKE THE YOUNG
PERSON FEEL WANTED. NOT JUST
[LIKE THE WORKER IS] DOING THEIR
JOB. THE YOUNG PERSON NEEDS TO
FEEL WANTED AND SUPPORTED
BY THE WORKER.

— Young woman

The principle of Relationship is supported by seven pillars of practice: Paced, Safety, Choices, Information, Harm Reduction, Listening, and Non-Judgemental.

02 PACED

Young people impacted by DFSV need to receive support that meets them where they are at, both developmentally and in their readiness to work towards change, rather than conditional support that may overwhelm the young person or escalate their situation.

03 SAFETY

Young people have the right to safety at all times, including in the care they receive. Here, safety reaches beyond the young person's physical safety to include emotional safety, safety within their relationships with professionals, and safety within systems. For example, safety within systems can take the form of effective collaboration across the Integrated Service Response. Imbuing a sense of deserving to be safe and respected is the first step a worker can take towards building safety with young people.

04 CHOICES

DFSV practice should uphold a young person's right to make informed decisions throughout their journey by continuously building their capacity to make safe decisions. Good DFSV practice includes transparency about when and how information can be shared.

DON'T USE WORDS LIKE YOU
NEED TO DO IT, OR YOU HAVE TO DO
IT. LET THEM KNOW THAT IF YOU DO IT,
X, Y, AND Z MIGHT COME OUT NICER.
TELL THEM THE BENEFITS OF WHAT
WILL HAPPEN.

— Young person who had used
violence prior to BYS support

FRAMEWORK SNAPSHOT *(CONT.)*

05 INFORMATION

Young people face limited access to accurate information about DFSV and safe relationships. Presenting accurate, age-appropriate information in a way that is tailored to the individual young person is a key step for them making sense of their life experiences.

07 LISTENING

Young people's voices often go unheard in many spaces in society. Listening to young people involves not just creating space but learning to actively hear what young people are saying, including through non-verbal cues.

06 HARM REDUCTION

It is vital to recognise when it is not possible to eliminate all risks of harm for young people impacted by DFSV and that, at times, it is more appropriate to focus on safety planning, ongoing risk assessment, and harm reduction within the context of the young person's relationships and circumstances.

08 NON-JUDGEMENTAL

Young people impacted by DFSV can feel intense shame from their experiences, placing them at risk of disengaging from support. They need to be safe to tell their stories free of judgment, including when they make mistakes.

ASK ABOUT [THE YOUNG PERSON'S] BACKGROUND. [FILING A DVO] MAY NOT BE IN THE YOUNG PERSON'S BEST INTEREST. AUTHORITY FIGURES, LIKE THE POLICE, CAN MAKE THINGS WORSE. IT CAN GET MESSY VERY QUICKLY.

— Young mum

DON'T DO CONDITIONAL SUPPORT WHERE YOU ONLY HELP IF THEY LEAVE. [THE YOUNG PERSON] LIVES AND LEARNS FROM [THEIR] MISTAKES.

— Young mum

LET THEM KNOW THEY WON'T BE SHAMED IF THEY DON'T FOLLOW THE PLAN OR ADVICE. YOUNG PEOPLE DO MAKE WRONG DECISIONS.

— Young person with violence in their family of origin

WHAT'S NEXT?

Funding is Urgently Needed for Holistic DFSV Support Tailored to Young People

- There is significant evidence to demonstrate that children and young people who have early exposure to DFSV in their family of origin are significantly at risk of victimisation (and use of violence) in their later life. Yet, there is an absence of targeted responses for the young people and young families that BYS works with every day.
- Funding is needed for targeted youth-specific DFSV interventions for crisis response, early interventions, and recovery.
- To get there, DFSV funding first needs to be made available to youth services that already provide holistic wraparound support, not just those considered to be DFSV specialist services.

Children and Young People are Part of the Solution

- If you ask young people what effective DFSV support looks and feels like for them, they can and will tell you.
- Children and young people should be engaged as part of the solution using strengths-based, trauma-informed methods when developing practice frameworks for DFSV.

IT WAS WORTHWHILE COMING
HERE TODAY AND LOOKING AT THE
PROGRAM RETROSPECTIVELY.

— Young person who had used
violence prior to BYS support

FURTHER READING

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