



Getting The Village Together:

Transforming Services for Young Families Through a
Two-Generational, Holistic Approach



Acknowledgement of Country

YFS respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's first peoples and the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we meet and work.

We recognise the important role they have within and country, and we pay our community respects to the Elders of this land past and present.

The Why and How



The Thriving Young Families Integrated Service Model



Relationships are the foundation and vehicle for change



Support is holistic and multifaceted two generational, responding to whole-of family needs, at times multi-generational



Parents set the direction and pace of the work



There is an intentional focus on building the skills young parents need to succeed



Services and opportunities to engage with peer support are father-inclusive



Responses are tailored to the unique needs, circumstances and aspirations of each family

The Thriving Young Families Integrated Service Model



Outcomes

Children and young people thrive

"We're in a better place now and I can do more stuff now because they've shown me how to deal with stuff better".

Family relationships flourish

"Young Dads' Squad has helped me connect with other dads without being judged or feeling out of place. I've learnt more about how to read my children's behaviour and how to cope better with them."

Adults are empowered

*'You can say no and yeah, make a choice'.
75.9% Post-service
'[They have] given [me] a better opportunity to be a successful person'.*

Communities are cohesive

'I never have to wait long for support'.

'[It is] better [getting support] at the same organisation because they can talk to each other and have different skills'.

'you get the help you need in one place.... it's exhausting getting help from different places'.

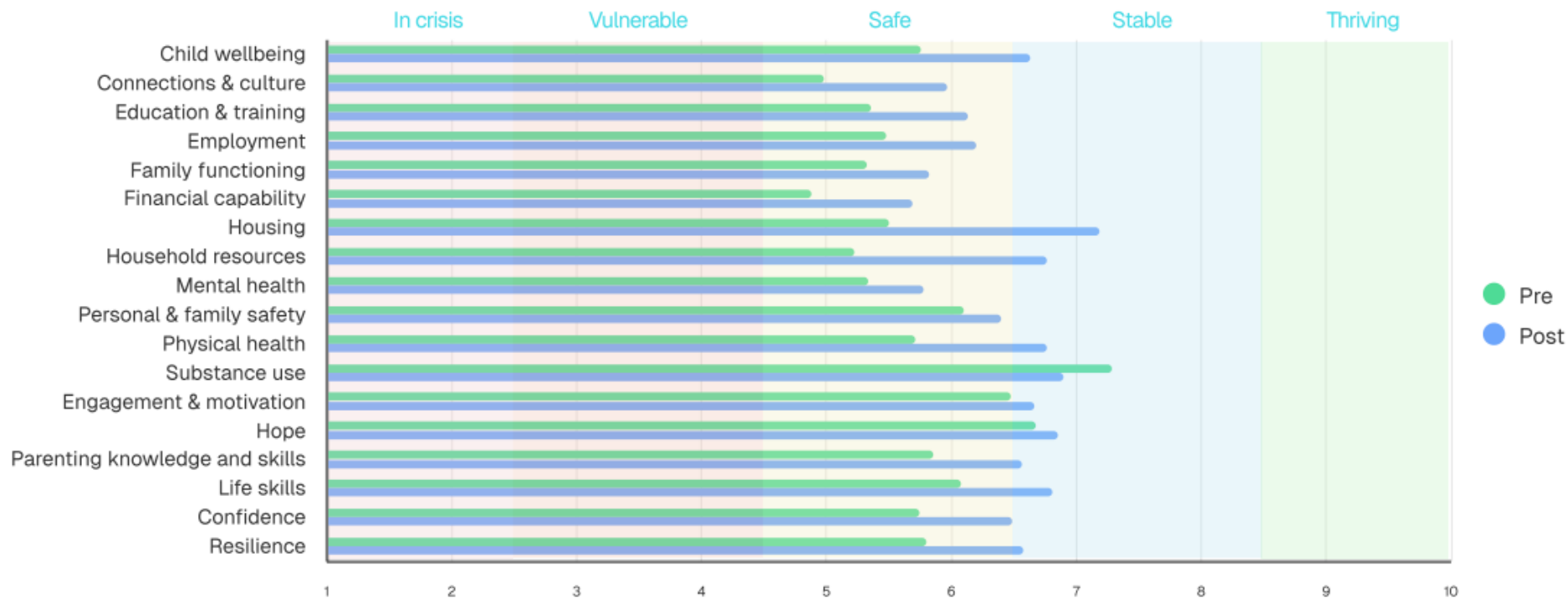
Evaluation

the science of
knowing

Thriving Matrix domains - Pre vs Post (n=51)

Statistically significant improvements in 12 of the 18 domains

9 domains have moved from the 'safe' zone into the 'stable' zone



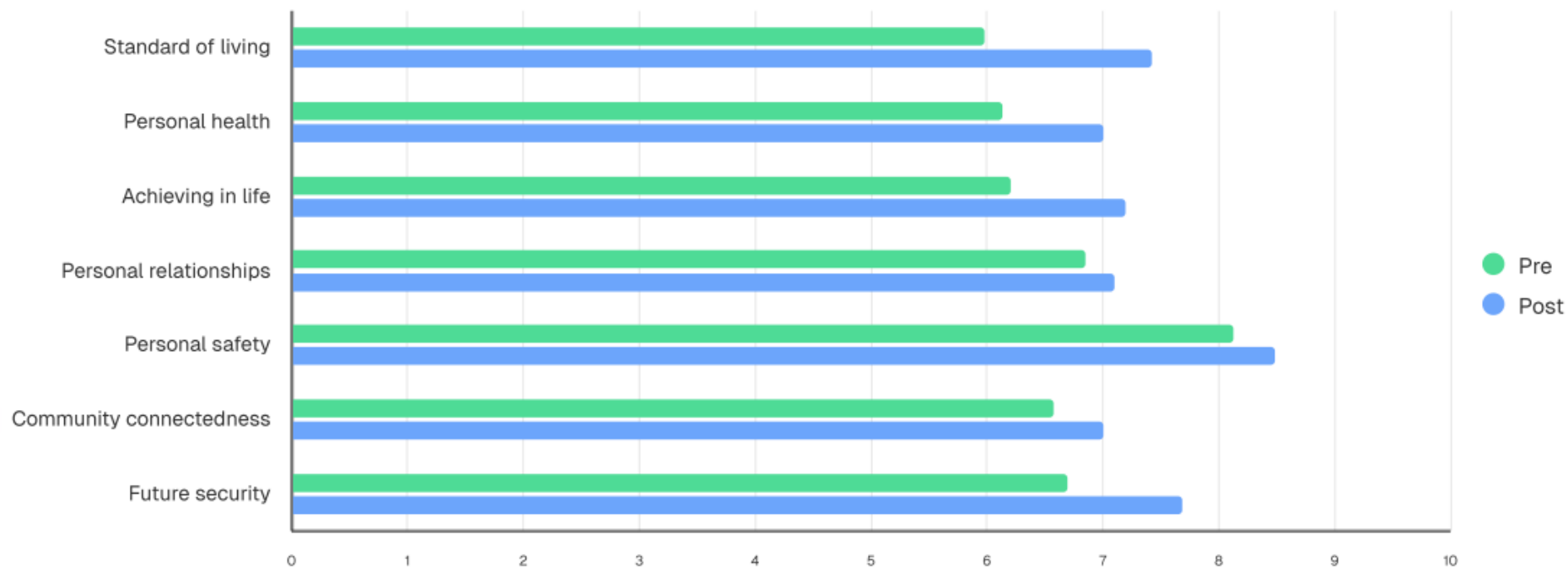
Evaluation

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Personal Wellbeing Index domains - Pre vs Post (n=48)

Statistically significant improvements in overall PWI Score and 4 of the 7 domains

PWI Score increased from 66.2 to 73.8 - just below the normative range for Australian adults (74.11-76.75)





Evaluation

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Relationship-based, non-judgmental practice

Young parents consistently described feeling listened to, understood and treated as capable rather than deficient.

The relational approach was central to engagement and trust, particularly for families with past experiences of trauma, DFV, homelessness or service disengagement.

Cultural safety embedded into practice, not bolted on

Cultural safety was visible through physical environments, workforce composition and relational continuity.

Rather than a discrete intervention, staff integrated cultural responsiveness into everyday practice.

Choice, control and flexibility

Families valued being able to step support up or down, choosing how and when to engage, and not being 'exited' when life became complex.

This flexibility was particularly important for young parents navigating unstable housing, DFV, health issues or caring demands.

Evaluation

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Parents

Increased confidence and self-efficacy
Improved ability to plan, prioritise and problem-solve

Greater stability in housing, employment and education

Improved understanding of healthy relationships and parenting



Children

Improved parent-child attachment
Increased access to healthcare and education

Developmental gains supported through playgroup and modelling



Families

Improved communication

Reduced crisis escalation

Stronger informal and peer support networks

Program functioned as proxy kinship network for families with limited family support

Evaluation

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1 Reduced burden on families

Less story repetition
Fewer appointments
Faster access to help
Reduced emotional and logistical load

2 Trust transfer

Families trust new workers and services
because rapport has already been established
within the program

3 Responsiveness

Internal coordination enables immediate
responses to crises, without lengthy referral or
communication processes

4 Staff effectiveness

Co-location, a shared database and informal and
formal communication practices lead to quicker
decision-making and better alignment of
support

Limitations - role clarity can be 'grey' and requires ongoing negotiation; integration relies heavily on relationships and is resource- and leadership-intensive



Data gaps & areas for improvement

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- **Parent outcomes**

Housing - real changes in housing situation in the longer-term

Employment - moves from unemployment to employment, part-time to full-time work, long-term employment

Income - increase in family income

- **Child outcomes**

Education - attendance at childcare/school

Wellbeing and safety - interactions with Child Safety

Development - reaching developmental milestones



Economic Findings

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- **Thriving Young Families is cost-effective**

The cost-benefit analysis demonstrates that the Thriving Young Families Project generates substantial economic value. Over a three-year period, the program returns **\$2.51 in benefits for every dollar invested**, based solely on improvements in participants' wellbeing as measured by the Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI)

- **The analysis excludes additional economic benefits evident in program data, including:**

Housing stability - participants showed marked improvements in measures of housing stability. Avoided homelessness generates substantial fiscal savings through reduced emergency accommodation, hospital presentations and crisis interventions.

Child protection impacts - improved parenting capacity and child socio-emotional wellbeing likely to prevent out-of-home care placements.

Employment gains - improvement in life skills, confidence and connections typically precede and enable sustained employment. These outcomes often manifest beyond the evaluation window.

Questions





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