

VILLAGE CONNECT

A HUB FOR PARENTS



Acknowledgment of Country

The Village Connect team acknowledges the traditional owners and their custodianship of the lands where we live, learn, and work. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people past, present, and future, who maintain cultural and spiritual connections to Country. We extend this respect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families we work with and support on their journey. We acknowledge our colleagues, parents and carers for their support, knowledge and dedication to our communities. With this contribution to our village, we can raise safe, strong, independent and successful children.



NSW Children need us to do better

If we want a different future system, then we must do things differently, establish new and different patterns and take different approaches to address the problems we know exist currently.[...] It will take us all working together in different ways.

There are approximately 14,000 children in Out of Home Care (OOHC) across NSW.

Early Years Catalyst Synthesis Report
2024

Aboriginal children are overrepresented in OOHC. In 2022, 44% of children in OOHC in NSW were Aboriginal while, Aboriginal children make up only about 7% of the overall child population in NSW.

The total Government expenditure on OOHC was \$1.883 billion in 2022-23, with costs continuing to rise.

The number of authorised OOHC carers in NSW is declining. Between 30 June 2021 and 30 June 2024, there was a 14% decrease in the number of authorised carers due to several factors, including the rise in cost of living.



Alignment with reforms and diversion from OOHC

Tune Review (2015) led to Their Futures Matter (TFM) Reform

(2016-2020)



Auditor General recommendations following TFM included continued exploration of the Investment Approach (IA) (2020).



SWS Investment Approach for Social Impact Strategy (IAFSIS) is the 2nd demonstration IA site in NSW.

An unprecedented co-design process followed (2021).



It set the standard for an inclusive community informed design process that is culturally led not adapted.



Since inception it has been underpinned by the notion that *what works best for Aboriginal people may work best for all people.*



IAFSIS applies a system lens across a constellation of projects. Village Connect is the key test case.

What is Village Connect? [Village Connect](#) - A hub for

parents, is a multi-[disciplinary, culturally](#) led, community designed, integrated support model that brings together 3 separate service providers together beyond collaboration to become an integrated model. The aim of Village Connect is to maximise the overall safety, wellbeing, resilience and improve lifetime trajectories of children and families.

Who is Village Connect for?

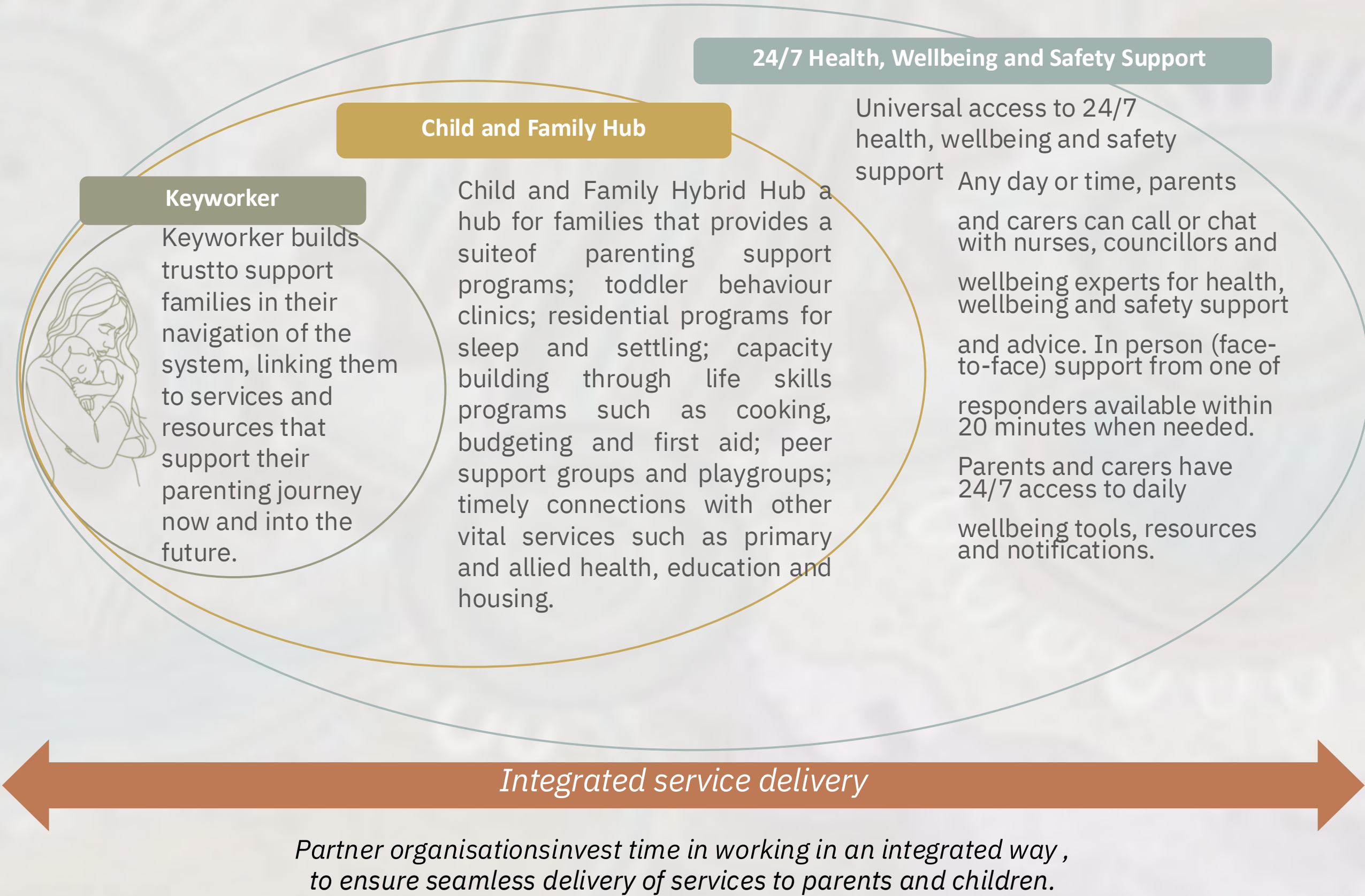
Access to 24/7 health, wellbeing and safety is available to ANY SWS parent/carer and their family.

The Child and Family Hybrid Hub and Keyworker model currently specialises in practice for

parents/carers 25 years and under, who are pregnant and/or have a child and live in SWS. There is work

underway to recreate the integrated approach for other priority groups in our community.

Village Connect Model on a page



Key worker Support

Uniting

Role of a Keyworker



PHASE 1 Engage	Engage with the parent on a concern or aspiration that they would like to work on together.
PHASE 2 Prepare	Support the parent to define the change they would like to make, what it means to them and the steps needed to get there.
PHASE 3 Embed	Build skills with the parent and support their connections to networks.
PHASE 4 Sustain	Support the parent with maintaining these skills and connections into the future and celebrate their achievements.



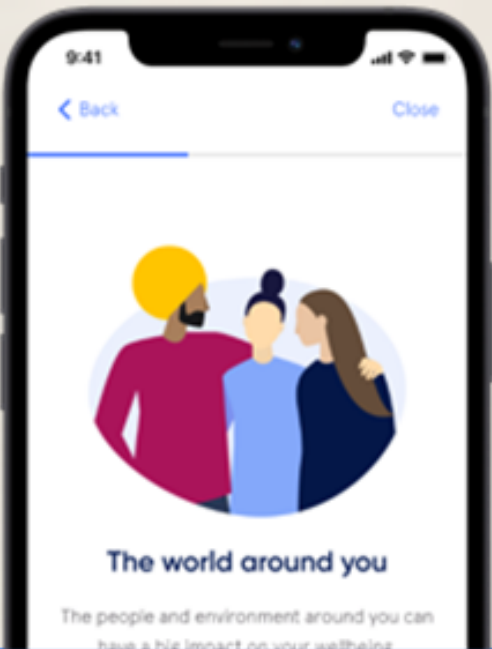
24/7 safety, medical and wellbeing support

Proactive messages
In-app push notifications
and alerts



Keeping parents informed

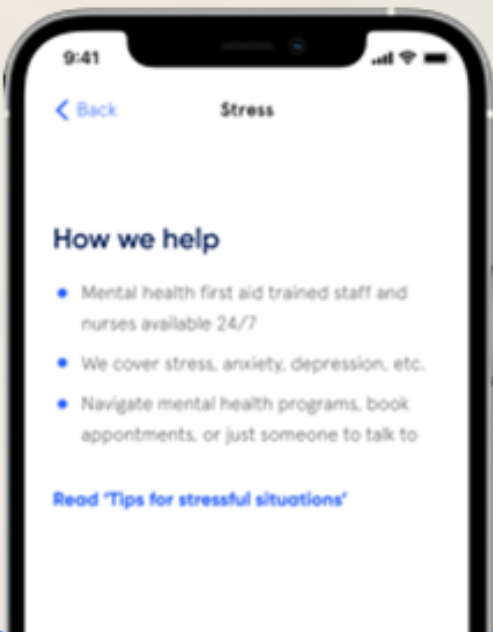
Wellbeing library
Self Assessment and Self-help
articles



A single point for self paced
wellbeing support



Chat or call
Connects immediately
to expert humans, 24/7



Direct contact 24/7 for
immediate human support



Human support
digital or in-person
Nurses, doctors, psychologists
& emergency trained
professionals



Karitane Hub

supports



Parents access the hub for the following reasons/supports:



child's sleep (responsive settling)



feeding and nutrition



child's play and interaction with other kids



understand a child's development



strengthen bond between parent and child



reduce a child's tantrums



Learn about and identify healthy & unhealthy relationships



Identify and support mental health



Peer connection and support



Growth, development, what to expect as child grows



understand a child's tricky behaviour



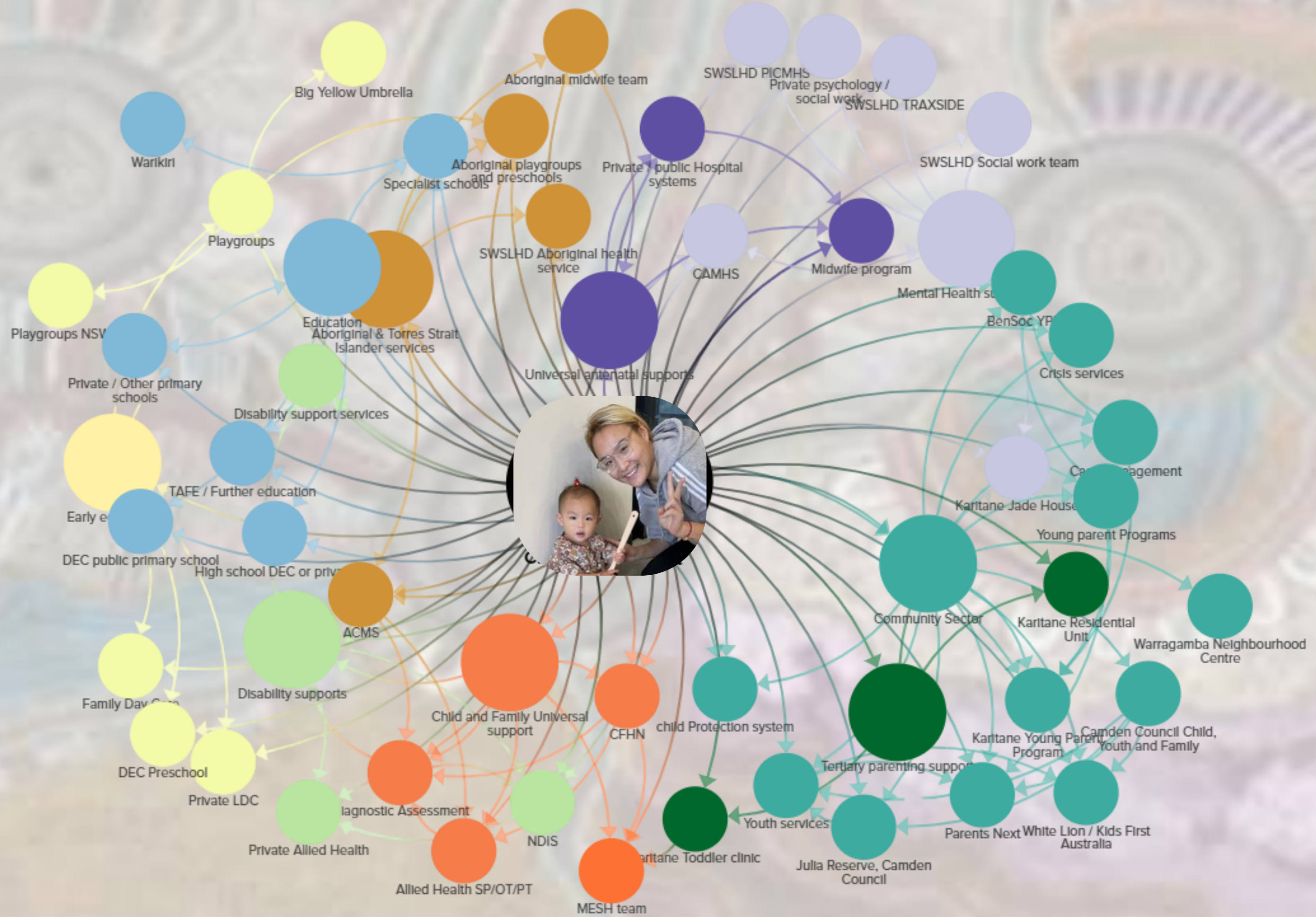
Learn new parenting skills, to build confidence

We are a multidisciplinary support team of System Navigator, Health Education Officers, Allied Health, Child and Family Nursing, program leadership, administrative support and an Aboriginal Family Support worker.

Supports include:

- Young parent playgroups,
- Young parent social and wellbeing groups and activities
- Parent education (evidence based parenting courses)
- Antenatal and post natal nursing support
- Early identification and intervention for developmental concerns
- Supported referral for more intense health and wellbeing supports (e.g. Karitane residential sleep and settling, Jade House or Toddler clinic)

Working within/alongside existing child and family, health, education and youth sectors



The Village Connect Difference

“Integrated services should be the default model, not the exception. Service providers operating in a silo should be required to explain why. Silos are only designed to meet administrative needs of government, not the real-life needs of human beings”

Australian National Children’s Commissioner, Anne Hollands.

Village Connect strengths	Current deficitsin the broader service system
• Integrated, coordinated mixed support service types available in a 'village' of support, with little to no wait times and simplified processes. • Staff recruited to match priority populations and support navigation of the system earlier, diverting from crisis and changing trajectories • Access to primary and allied health services	• Siloed, fragmented services with lengthy referral and wait times for each service Complex system that is challenging to navigate . • Overserviced families working in silos, and not engaged with the right service for them at the right time • Long wait times and access pathway confusion leading to poorer outcomes
• Specialised practice for priority cohorts • Use of relational care, with the parent in the driving seat • Family and person centred, using Family Partnership approach • Culturally led, through CIPP implementation • Strengths-based, holistic practice. • Trauma informed with reduced need for re-telling stories	• Generic practices that miss the nuances of priority groups and risk disengagement or service avoidance with limited influence for trajectory change • Family to fit service not service designed around the family • Culturally adapted services with areas of need determined by the referrer with deficit focus
• Universal access to 24/7health, safety and wellbeing support, integrated within a 'village' of support for warm follow up, de-escalation and prevention of issues and diversion from crisis	• Limiting eligibility criteria for each program area/service type that often don't align, limiting accessibility. • Supports accessible during normal business hours only • Families lost in the system not receiving the right support at the right time

Achieving better outcomes for

families

1. Moving beyond collaboration to integration:

Village Connect partners have developed stronger internal relationships that acknowledge the different objectives, priorities and expectations of each organisation

Each organisation brings different expertise to the team, all of which benefits young parents. This investment of time and communication has led to a more mature and developed partnership, which enables them to provide a more integrated service for parents.



1. Investing time in building trust and rapport

The Village Connect model prioritises time to develop meaningful relationships between parents and support workers.

Developing meaningful relationships with staff enables parents to develop high levels of trust and psychological safety. They are therefore able to have more effective conversations about their needs and feel empowered to make important decisions about their family.

They've supported me through everything. I recently left the kids' dad and they helped with that. They helped me find a rental; they helped advocate for that. They're helping advocate for my son with all his [autistic] needs right now.

Village Connect Mum

It's not just like one person. Everyone works together to cater to your needs. Not even just that - they're not just staff, they're like a family. They support you, they give you their perspective.

Village Connect Mum

The speech [therapy] and OT, they speak to each other to get the best outcome for my son. And [say] "Oh I noticed this. OK, how can we help here?" and they go to the [Village Connect] multi-disciplinary teams [meetings] to figure out what's best for each person.

Village Connect Mum

Staff celebrate with you and [your] milestones. I just messaged my [Village Connect] worker and was, like "Hey I did this today!" and they were like "Hey that's so good", supporting me with something simple.

Village Connect Mum

[My Village Connect worker has] helped with being there to just talk when I need to talk to someone. When I'm down or having a bad day, she'll ring or message me and ask me how I am and I'll just talk to her.... For me, she just supports me.

She's there for me when I need her.

Village Connect Mum

1. Working flexibly to meet each family's unique needs

The Village Connect model is all about flexibility. Staff understand that the needs and goals of each parent / caregiver and child will differ.

Each team is resourced with the time, budget, skills, knowledge and experience to meet the individual and holistic needs of families. Why is this important? Working flexibility enables staff to meet the individual needs and goals of each families so that parents can spend their time providing care for their child, rather than on the systemic barriers they often face.



1. Creating conditions for parents' self-empowerment

Each element of Village Connect supports parents to develop their own skills, capacities and local networks, in particular, they set their own goals and are in control of their own decisions throughout the program which is empowering for parents.

It helps to ensure that they feel confident in their abilities and supported after leaving the program.

A lot of things just focus on how your kid is doing, they kinda forget about Mum. And a lot of things, even more, forget about Dad. Coming here though, it includes everyone; it's like your whole family.

Village Connect Mum

I met my best friend doing LoveBites and, I made a really genuine connection that I still talk to on a daily basis....we help each other out when needed.

Village Connect Mum

When they said you'll be connected with someone within a minute, I was kinda like "oh yeah, right" [but] the medical side of things from what I've experienced, is literally, within the minute, they've contacted you back and "Hey, so how can I help you?".

Village Connect Mum

Once I started coming to the parents' group I was like yes, I like this, yes. I was looking forward to coming and getting the connection to other mums.

Village Connect Mum

Coming here and meeting everyone was so cool. I've made lifelong friends with girls in the program. It helped me develop my career, and my goals even.

Village Connect Mum

Becky's story

