



Australian Government

Department of Social Services

Families and Communities Programme

Families and Children Activity

Reconnect
Operational Guidelines
1 July 2018 to 30 June 2021

As at 3 July 2018

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1. Introduction

The Reconnect Operational Guidelines 2018-2021 ('Guidelines') provide the operational framework for Reconnect service providers in the implementation and administration of Reconnect.

These Guidelines provide the basis for the service delivery of Reconnect and should be read in conjunction with the contractual arrangements under which payments to deliver Reconnect services are made.

The Operational Guidelines include:

- The purpose of Reconnect
- The role and expectations of Reconnect services providers
- Information pertinent to the successful delivery of Reconnect

The Department of Social Services ('the Department') reserves the right to amend these Guidelines from time to time, by whatever means it may determine at its absolute discretion, provided the changes are consistent with the Standing Grant Agreement. The Department will provide reasonable notice of these amendments.

The Department will ensure the most current version of the Guidelines is available on its website (www.dss.gov.au/reconnect).

It is the responsibility of each Reconnect service provider to ensure they are familiar with the content and requirements of these Guidelines.

2. Reconnect

The Australian Government has committed up to \$117 million over five years for the Reconnect program. Reconnect service providers have been offered three year grant agreements (1 July 2018 to 30 June 2021), with the option to extend funding for a further two years for Reconnect service providers meeting performance objectives outlined in the performance framework and in grant agreements.

The long-term funding commitment follows a period of consultation during 2017 between the Department and Reconnect service providers, state officials and related services to explore options with service providers and young people who access Reconnect services on how the early intervention and prevention aspects of the program can be strengthened.

2.1 Overview of Reconnect

Reconnect was established in 1998 as a response to youth homelessness, following a two-year pilot Youth Homelessness Project.

The Reconnect program is a community based early intervention and prevention program for young people aged 12 to 18 years (or 12 to 21 years in the case of newly arrived youth) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and their families. For a definition of early intervention for the Reconnect program, please refer to Section 9.2 Expanded definitions of key terms.

Reconnect is well regarded and recognised as contributing to better outcomes that improve the lives of vulnerable young Australians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Reconnect services provide counselling, group work, mediation and practical support to the whole family, to help prevent homelessness from occurring. Reconnect service providers also purchase other services to meet the individual needs of clients, such as specialised mental health services.

Reconnect workers use a range of interventions and strategies with a young person and their whole family, to deliver a timely intervention. Examples of approaches typically used by Reconnect workers include:

- assessment and goal setting
- case management
- referral
- advocacy
- counselling (individual and family)
- mediation
- group work
- outreach
- practical support
- brokerage
- therapies (individual and family)
- collaboration with other services (specialists, community stakeholders and networks)

2.2 Outcomes, aims and objectives

Reconnect is intended to help young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness stabilise and improve their housing situation, achieve family reconciliation (wherever practicable) and improve their level of engagement with education, training, employment and the community.

Reconnect objectives include:

- young people re-engage or strengthen their engagement with education or training, the community and employment, including:
 - increased school attendance
 - finish school or training
 - increased social connectedness, such as with sporting groups
 - improved employment opportunities
- family reconciliation, wherever practicable and safe, between homeless young people, or those at risk of homelessness and their family. Family reconciliation includes:
 - the young person returns home
 - ongoing positive family relationships are created which provide the young person with emotional and physical support
 - conflict is reduced or dealt with more positively
 - reconciling the young person with other family members, for example with grandparents or siblings
 - both parent(s) and the young person accepting that independence is appropriate for the young person
 - establishing a viable support system for the independent young person that includes a member of their family
- fewer entries into homelessness including:
 - preventing homelessness
 - fewer young people end up homeless
 - effective early intervention for people who have recently been homeless
 - more young people in safe, secure and stable housing
- improved wellbeing and mental health including:
 - improved sense of self and positive self-worth
 - young people are more resilient, feel supported and are self sufficient

3. Operation of Reconnect

3.1 Reconnect Good Practice Principles

In delivering early intervention and prevention services to meet the aims of the Reconnect program, Reconnect service providers are expected to comply with the following Good Practice Principles. These principles are integral in achieving outcomes for young people and families.

Client-centred

Reconnect services provide assistance to clients based on their individual needs, and deliver flexible services that can adapt to the needs of both young people and their families. Some of the key features of client-centred services include:

- solutions-based goal setting with the client, which provides skills to deal with both current and future situations
- establishing trust and rapport with clients, through demonstrating a genuine commitment to helping young people and their families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and a capacity to relate to them with dignity and respect
- linking participants with a range of supports and ensuring they are referred to appropriate services, brokerage funds may enable a service to respond creatively by purchasing specific services
- assisting young people to develop creative solutions to their problems
- advocating for young people in a service system environment
- promoting ethical behaviour and anti-discriminatory practice that treats consumers, family and staff with dignity and respect

Where Reconnect workers are using clinical interventions such as counselling or individual / family therapy, the worker would be expected to have a requisite qualification.

Accessible

Reconnect services should be accessible and visible to the client in their local community. Some key features of accessible services include:

- promotional material which is sensitive in the language it uses, to avoid clients being perceived as 'problem subjects'
- responses by Reconnect workers within 24-48 hours can decrease the possibility of young people leaving or being expelled from the family home
- outreach, for example through offering assistance in a place that clients are most comfortable, such as meeting them in a café or youth centre, can help reduce the stigma people may feel about accessing a 'welfare' service
- culturally and contextually competent service delivery

Sustainable

Reconnect services should empower clients and their families to make positive and sustainable choices towards their goals. Some key features of sustainability include:

- empowering the client to achieve more sustainable outcomes
- recognising the client's capabilities and strengths and encouraging the client to build resilience in striving towards goals despite setbacks

- empowering communities by including local understanding of what is happening for young people and families and providing information to assist solutions and ways forward
- recognising that young people's identity is a strength
- using approaches which are solutions-focused so clients gain increased control of their own lives
- equipping young people with resources to make decisions about their own lives
- developing knowledge of and using existing local community resources

Relationship-based

Constructive working relationships between clients and Reconnect services are essential to effective interventions and strategies for addressing youth homelessness. Reconnect services should:

- allow their workers the autonomy to build and maintain appropriate relationships with young people
- ensure workers have compassion, patience and an ability to empathise with clients
- ensure young people are connected to others, such as their family and community, and support the development of positive relationships
- build friendly and confidential relationships with clients
- recognise that trauma may have occurred in a young person's prior relationships, and that this may impact their behaviour

Collaborative

Reconnect services should use some of their time networking and developing effective working relationships with other services and schools, in order to facilitate a streamlined service system. Some key features of collaborating include:

- working with a range of core services including schools, community agencies, and specialist services (e.g. culturally-specific, drug, alcohol and health services)
- participate in relevant interagency networks including state and territory government services
- sharing information, where consent from the client has been obtained, to facilitate seamless referrals and improve the services they receive
- working in a co-case management context to support young people at risk
- partner with other organisations to improve outcomes for young people

Holistic

Reconnect services work with the understanding that problems are not isolated from other aspects of a client's life. Reconnect services should consider a client's situation in the context of education, family and community participation. Reconnect services

should use a range of interventions and strategies with a young person and their whole family to prevent homelessness from occurring, including:

- working with families and other relevant people or groups for the young person
- providing assistance, where appropriate, to improve housing outcomes or stabilise living arrangements
- providing a 'tool box' of interventions such as counselling, group work, mediation, family meetings and practical assistance

Culturally and contextually competent

Reconnect service delivery requires a sensitive approach to cultural and contextual differences. Reconnect services should be informed by the different needs of clients and communities.

Cultural considerations may include:

- language issues where assistance from bilingual staff, translation and interpreters is required
- differences in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and between generations
- intersecting experiences of marginalisation creating diversity of experience within cultural groups
- different roles young people play with their families and differing cultural expectations family members may place on them
- differing expectations according to the age of the young person
- protective factors that already exist within communities, that can be used to support a young person
- effects of migration on families
- recognising the young person's refugee journey as a strength and a tool for building resilience
- the difference in the culture of the country of origin and the new culture which can cause conflict between parent and young person
- different experiences of young people who identify as part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer community, and young people who are questioning their sexual orientation and gender identity

Contextual considerations may include:

- geographical location (urban, rural or regional)
- distances to travel to access services and availability of public transport
- noting key issues affecting families in the community being served
- role and crossover that communities may play in the young person's family
- advocating for young people in a service system environment

- family composition and arrangements with people from diverse backgrounds can mean extra pressure on housing

Review and evaluate

Ongoing review and evaluation, using frameworks agreed to by the Department and Reconnect services, is important in ensuring that early intervention services are effective and responsive to the needs of participants. Established evaluation methods, for example by using implementation science or a Participatory Action Research approach, assist Reconnect service providers to provide flexible services. Building in regular feedback from participants and other agencies should enable adjustments to service delivery and have additional positive benefits, such as improvement of young people's situations.

3.2 Reconnect target group

Reconnect service providers are funded to deliver services to young people aged 12 to 18 years (or 12-21 years for newly arrived youth) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and their families.

Services must consider issues relating to obtaining consent from minors, and whether they need to obtain legal advice.

The Department must agree in writing to any change on previously agreed target groups/specialist approach (e.g. Indigenous, newly arrived youth or leaving detention).

Up to 10 per cent of a Reconnect service provider's participant caseload can be out of scope clients who are either outside the target group, including age range or who live outside of the funded geographic area, provided that expanding the scope of service in this way will not disadvantage eligible participants from accessing Reconnect services.

As soon as out of scope clients number more than 10 per cent of the participant caseload, the Reconnect service provider should detail the rationale for focusing on this additional target group and obtain written approval from the Department to exceed the 10 per cent flexibility.

The Reconnect program recognises that some client groups have unique needs. Some Reconnect services offer specialised assistance and support to specific client groups. These groups are:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ)
- Mental health
- Multicultural
- Newly arrived and refugee

- Young incarcerated women or young people with mothers who are incarcerated

Reconnect services that offer specialist services should ensure that 80 per cent of their caseload is made up from the specialist target group.

3.3 Length of support

As a guide, a typical early intervention engagement with a Reconnect service would be expected to average three to four months in length.

Early intervention in a Reconnect context refers to measures taken to assist individual young people when they are at risk of homelessness, or as soon as possible after the young person has become homeless. Early intervention is assistance to young people either in the early stages of a homelessness, or with those young people perceptibly at risk of becoming homeless.

Some Reconnect providers offer midstream services, where the caseload will often require more complex support for clients who require case management over six months.

3.4 Referrals

Reconnect aims to improve collaboration between services to ensure young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness can access appropriate assistance from multiple entry points to services. As part of the homelessness services system, Reconnect services are expected to work collaboratively with other services, such as schools, to increase the early intervention capacity of the service system and make sure all clients presenting or being referred to Reconnect either receive assistance or are directed to more appropriate services.

It is important that contact with referred clients be attempted within 24-48 hours of the referral being made. Evidence suggests that responses from service providers within 24 hours can help to prevent home leaving in at-risk youth. Response can include making contact to set up an intake time.

Reconnect services can accept referrals from any source. Reconnect services should maintain effective linkages with appropriate agencies in their local community to assist with making appropriate and effective referrals. Participants may self-refer or be referred from a range of sources including:

- schools, education and training organisations
- family, and caregivers
- friends
- non-government community agencies
- Centrelink
- juvenile justice agencies
- police or legal units

- youth refuge, youth housing or accommodation services
- medical services
- mental health services
- other government departments
- within your organisation

This list is not exhaustive. Reconnect services can accept referrals from any source as long as the person being referred meets the eligibility criteria.

Reconnect services should maintain effective linkages with appropriate agencies in their local community to assist with making early, appropriate and effective referrals.

3.5 Working with other services and schools

Focusing on early intervention and prevention will mean more young people in need of assistance are identified early and have access to services before they become homeless or disengaged and before problems compound. An important characteristic of early intervention and prevention services is the establishment and maintenance of links with key stakeholders across other services and schools.

Key stakeholders include:

- schools in their community
- Centrelink
- youth services
- accommodation and/or refuge services
- charitable organisations
- state/territory youth and welfare departments and other government departments
- police, juvenile justice and legal services
- counselling services
- cultural, recreational and/or sporting groups
- community elders, young people, families etc.

Key stakeholders are integral to providing a holistic and quality service and can provide valuable information on issues including referral processes, client needs, local issues, community feedback and approaches or gaps in service delivery.

Key stakeholders are those with whom the Reconnect service provider interacts during service delivery and the services providing incoming and outgoing referrals.

Active involvement with key stakeholders is in line with the Good Practice Principles. It also assists the Reconnect service provider to incorporate community feedback into their planning and review processes.

When working with Centrelink, Reconnect service providers should provide Centrelink with a detailed written and/or oral report if requested for the following scenarios:

- where a young person is homeless is a current Reconnect client and is currently in receipt of income support (due to it being unreasonable for them to live at home) and that support is shortly to be reviewed
- where a homeless young person is a current Reconnect client and is applying for Australian Government income support

Reconnect service providers should prioritise working relationships with organisations delivering similar programs to avoid duplication of effort, develop strong referral pathways, enable collaborative casework strategies, and build effective sector capacity to support the Reconnect target group.

Reconnect service providers must acknowledge that the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*, *Privacy Act 1988* and the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999* may apply to the use and disclosure of reports. The Department or Centrelink may also require Reconnect service providers to sign declarations of privacy and confidentiality when receiving personal and other information.

3.6 Improving connections with local services

To ensure young people are referred to Reconnect services earlier and before problems compound, Reconnect service providers should:

- develop strong links and close collaboration with key services in their area to better connect young people to key local services
- deliver capacity building to key local services to help them improve the visibility of their services, including expanding their outreach component, to better identify young people at risk
- use supporting material to explain what Reconnect does and its focus on providing early intervention and prevention services for young people at risk of homelessness and their families, and assist Reconnect services to work with key local services

3.7 Improving connections with local schools

To ensure more young people receive services they need sooner rather than after problems have compounded, local Reconnect service providers should:

- work with schools where there are a high number of young people at risk of homelessness, and have an agreed clear service offer with these schools
- where there is no existing relationship with a school, the use of pro-forma service offers for schools can assist to outline what Reconnect can do to support the young person and their family, and when and how schools should refer young people to Reconnect
- work with relevant services and local schools where population screening approaches are used to identify young people most at risk of homelessness

3.8 Community collaboration

Reconnect service providers can assist young people by networking, developing collaborative partnerships and providing leadership in early intervention issues.

This can be done through:

- collaborating on support for individuals
- integrating service delivery
- networking with existing agencies (or building new networks) to identify issues and address gaps and barriers in local service delivery

Effective community collaboration includes the opportunity to:

- participate in inter-agency groups, committees and forums to work on issues of common concern
- collaborate in joint ventures with agencies working with the same target group or issues of concern
- collaborate in local community gatherings or state based forums
- develop positive working relationships with government agencies
- exchange ideas and knowledge

3.9 Reconnect forums

Reconnect forums are a highly valued and essential tool for supporting Reconnect service providers to maximise outcomes for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and their families. The purpose of the forums will be to bring together Reconnect service providers and Departmental representatives to discuss the operation of Reconnect, set direction and facilitate good practice.

Reconnect services providers are required to participate in any Department Reconnect forums which aim to improve the capacity of services and the program to deliver effective early intervention strategies through evidence-based good practice..

The Department's National Office will participate in Reconnect forums to enable Reconnect service providers and the Department to come together to collaborate on 'good practice' approaches and recent policy developments.

3.10 Community capacity building

In addition to supporting young people and families through service delivery, Reconnect service providers are encouraged to contribute to building the capacity of their community. Strengthening community capacity can be defined as enhancing the ability of individuals, schools, organisations and communities to manage their own affairs and to work collaboratively to encourage and sustain positive change.

The aim of community capacity building in Reconnect is to assist communities to identify risk factors or early signs of disengagement from school, community and family; youth homelessness; awareness of available resources and people; and

strategies to address issues. Building community capacity involves developing skills and knowledge among parents and community members in order to increase their capacity to support their families' needs.

Reconnect services vary in the extent to which they initiate, or are a part of, community capacity building projects aimed at bringing about broader change within a community. Examples of community capacity building projects may include, but are not limited to:

- working with relevant community stakeholders and agencies to address issues arising from Reconnect service delivery (e.g. developing a holistic community response to cyber bullying)
- identifying needs or gaps and establishing a new service or working to change the way current services respond in addressing need. For instance, a Reconnect service might work with other agencies to establish a mentoring service by seeking funding to allow the service to operate, or a Reconnect service might work with other services to run weekend camps that connect young people with culture
- developing / providing training to increase skills of other services to work more effectively with young people and families, especially in early intervention
- developing / providing training to create awareness and increase skills of school staff to identify risk factors of young people as a way to prevent homelessness
- developing products such as a youth access card, booklet for parents of young people who identify as LGBTIQ, or a common assessment form between services
- increasing participation and skill of community members (including young people and families) in addressing the needs within the community. For example working with businesses to expand work opportunities, and training young people in action research and getting them to research some aspect of need

Community capacity building projects may take a long time to complete and may result in a range of outcomes. A project may be initiated and developed over a few years with smaller projects occurring as supplements to the main project. If a service is undertaking a project that includes running a training group as an element, it would be recorded as 'Group Work' on the Data Exchange, as well as recording the broader project in the annual service stocktake report to capture the larger scope of the work.

The everyday work of Reconnect services to maintain partnership arrangements, build service relations, build interagency relationships, and contribute to one-off community events, should not be recorded as community capacity building projects unless they are part of a larger community capacity building activity.

The reporting of community capacity building projects is voluntary and is not a requirement of the Reconnect grant agreement. Community capacity building

projects are reported in the annual service stocktake, refer to Section 5.2 Service stocktake.

3.11 Group work

While individual casework is the core requirement of the program, Reconnect services are able to work with clients and potential clients through group work as a preventative measure.

Group work may:

- be all that some young people need
- be a less threatening 'soft' entry point to support
- allow young people to attend with their peers or siblings and assist in 'breaking the cycle' of negative behaviour or influence
- provide support to young people in realising 'they are not alone' in dealing with certain issues
- offer a support network
- develop opportunity for young people formerly engaged in the service to act as peer support and/or mentors
- empower young people through support of people of their own age and experience
- involve a number of support services participating over the course of time, particularly if the group is multi-session
- be effective in engaging young people if a waiting list exists at the time of referral and one-to-one work is not possible initially
- be an effective way to provide services in an outreach location where ongoing one-to-one support is not readily available
- provide a network for other groups including parents and other care-givers
- provide opportunities for social and fun activities through numbers
- bring together young people of the same gender or target group
- be a cost-effective way of managing larger groups of clients

Community information sessions, such as providing information about a Reconnect service to a school group, does not fall into the category of group work, instead is recognised as Community Capacity Building.

3.12 Non-engagement client

In recognition of the additional work Reconnect service providers conduct in line with the 'no wrong door' policy with clients who are *not eligible* Reconnect clients, the Department has created the category of 'non-engagement client'.

A 'non-engagement client' is a person who does not fit the Reconnect target group, refer to Section 3.2 Reconnect target group. An example of a 'non-engagement

client' may be they are the carer of a young person, are supported by Reconnect but the young person they care for is not or does not engage.

The reporting of work conducted with the 'non-engagement client' is voluntary and not a requirement of the Reconnect grant agreement. While voluntary, the collection of this type of data by organisations informs the Department of 'unmet' need. Work with 'non-engagement client' is reported in the Service Stocktake, refer to Section 5.2 Service stocktake.

Non-engagement clients do not count towards the Service's 10 per cent flexibility of caseload.

3.13 Unidentified 'group' clients

Reconnect is primarily client facing where ongoing relationships are formed, and it is expected that most clients recorded in DEX will be identified and provided with individual client goals.

Reconnect services can work with clients and potential clients through group work. In cases such as education sessions delivered in a large group setting (such as to a high school year group), the use of unidentified 'group' clients may be appropriate. Group clients should not be recorded under all other circumstances.

Reconnect Services are expected to record group work in the annual service stocktake. Please refer to Section 5 Data Collection for more information.

4. Funding within the program

4.1 What Reconnect grant funding may be used for

The grant **may** be used for:

- staff salaries and on-costs which can be directly attributed to the provision of the Reconnect program in the identified service area as per the grant agreement
- employee training for paid and unpaid staff including Committee and Board members, that is relevant, appropriate and in line with the Reconnect program
- operating and administration expenses directly related to the delivery of Reconnect services, such as:
 - telephones
 - rent and outgoings
 - computer / IT / website / software
 - insurance
 - utilities
 - postage
 - stationery and printing

- accounting and auditing
- travel/accommodation costs
- assets as defined in the Terms and Conditions of the grant agreement that can be reasonably attributed to meeting agreement deliverables

Reconnect service providers can only spend grant funds on eligible grant activities as defined in the grant agreement.

4.2 What Reconnect grant funding cannot be used for

Reconnect service providers **cannot** use the grant for:

- service management fees
- purchase of land
- major capital expenditure
- covering of retrospective costs
- costs incurred in the preparation of a grant application or related documentation
- subsidy of general ongoing administration of an organisation such as electricity, phone and rent not related to delivering Reconnect services
- major construction / capital works
- overseas travel
- activities for which other Commonwealth, State, Territory or Local Government bodies have primary responsibility

4.3 Brokerage / client costs

Brokerage costs intend to enable Reconnect service providers to offer additional support services that are needed in the short to medium term that they do not have the capacity to provide.

Brokerage / client costs are not intended to replace emergency relief or other crisis / cash assistance from other sources.

As a guide, five per cent of annual funding should be reserved for brokerage.

Brokerage costs can be used to purchase a range of services or items including but not limited to:

- educational / vocational related items and / or costs associated with facilitating engagement or re-engagement in education, training or work
- health-related services which cannot be accessed within a reasonable timeframe from the public health system, including mental health services
- legal services
- specific services to assist young people and their families in practical ways, such as transport, meals, private psychological assessments, counselling and

mediation, accommodation assistance (including respite), and translating services

The Reconnect service provider must ensure staff are aware of the amount of brokerage funds available in order to use them effectively to provide support to participants.

4.4 Annual budget

The Department may, at its discretion, require Reconnect service providers to submit a detailed budget, refer to Section 8 Annual budget line items for further information.

5. Data collection

Data collection provides the information required by the Department to monitor and evaluate the Department's programs. Continued funding of programs relies heavily on the ability of the Department to provide observable and objective measures of performance.

The Department undertakes to:

- request data for legitimate business needs, i.e. policy development, planning, accountability and program management
- make data collection consistent with other program areas working with similar target groups
- provide services with the tools to have input to the development and review of data collection
- collect data for program and/or service-level evaluation
- enable Reconnect service providers to review their data and track performance against benchmarks through the Data Exchange

5.1 Data Exchange Partnership Approach

To be better informed on the effectiveness of Reconnect services, from 1 July 2018, all Reconnect service providers will be required to participate in the partnership approach under the Data Exchange (the Department's IT system for recording performance).

Participation in the partnership approach is a requirement of Reconnect funding.

The partnership approach will improve the data available to the Department for all Reconnect services.

The focus of the partnership approach is collecting information about the outcomes achieved by clients. Client outcomes can be achieved in a variety of different ways and progressively over different periods of time.

The partnership approach includes a Standard Client/Community Outcomes Reporting (SCORE) element, which has been designed to collect information in ways that do not impose additional administrative costs on providers. There are four different types of outcomes measured through SCORE to help tell the story of what has been achieved.

The following SCORE components and domains are important for Reconnect:

- **Circumstance:** community participation and networks; employment, education and training; family functioning; housing; and mental health; wellbeing and self-care
- **Goal:** changed knowledge and access to information; changed behaviours; changed confidence to make own decisions; changed engagement with relevant support service; changed impact of immediate crisis; changed skills
- **Community:** group / community knowledge, skills, behaviours to better address their own needs
- **Satisfaction:** satisfied with the service received; the service listened and understood the issues of the client; better able to deal with issue that client sought help with

The partnership approach includes some extended data items that provide additional information about clients. For Reconnect, the homelessness indicator is important.

Data must be provided in accordance with the Data Exchange Protocols available on the Department's website (<https://dex.dss.gov.au/>). It is expected participation in the partnership approach will support organisations to be better informed and connected to other services. The Department will use data from the partnership approach as part of its evaluation of provider performance to determine future funding.

There are no prerequisites or browser requirements for the Data Exchange web-based portal. It has been tested to work with multiple browser types and versions. However, there are requirements and exceptions for running AUSkey, which is the government authentication system that Reconnect service providers require to access the Data Exchange. Information on browser compatibility is available from the Australian Business Register website <https://abr.gov.au>.

5.2 Service stocktake

The service stocktake is a reporting requirement in all Department's grant agreements. It covers compliance reporting and gives Reconnect service providers an opportunity to share stories of success or any challenges experienced in delivering the funded service.

The service stocktake collects evidence that Reconnect service providers are compliant with the conditions set out in their grant agreement.

Detail in the service stocktake should include but is not limited to:

- client feedback (including what clients said and how the feedback is captured)
- community capacity building projects
- roadshows and events (e.g. Youth Homelessness Matters Day, R U OK Day)
- work with non-engagement clients
- group work activities undertaken by the service
- work undertaken with other services

The collection of this type of data informs the Department of the work undertaken by a Reconnect service provider.

Reconnect service providers will complete the service stocktake annually. The due date for the annual Service Stocktake report is 15 August each year.

Providers can refer to the Reconnect Performance Framework for further detail of when the Service Stocktake will be used as a tool to evaluate performance.

5.3 Performance evaluation

The Department will evaluate the Reconnect program to measure how well service providers are achieving outcomes and objectives. Grant agreements require Reconnect service providers to provide information to help with this evaluation.

A full evaluation of provider performance against a performance framework will be finalised in the 2019-20 financial year. The performance framework focuses on achieving outcomes in increased use of early intervention and prevention services, improved connections with other services and schools, increased community collaboration and community capacity building, participation in employment, education and training; improved family and client functioning; access to safe and appropriate housing; and mental health and wellbeing.

Other mechanisms to monitor performance could include site visits by the Department, direct feedback from clients or other evaluative processes to assess efficiency and effectiveness of the Reconnect program.

6. Complaints

6.1 Handling complaints

All Reconnect service providers are required to have mechanisms in place to address complaints from Reconnect clients and make this available to the Department if requested.

Complaint handling mechanisms should be easily identifiable, accessible and solution oriented. They should be sensitive to the issues Reconnect clients face, be

responsive to their needs as consumers and ensure confidentiality, natural justice and procedural fairness.

Reconnect service providers are required to maintain a formal register of complaints received and provide the register to the Department if requested.

6.2 Complaints from Reconnect clients

Reconnect services are encouraged to work with clients to resolve matters before contacting the Department's complaints line. In some circumstances, Reconnect clients may not wish to discuss their complaint with their Reconnect service provider or may simply wish to deal directly with the Department.

Reconnect clients can contact the Department Feedback Coordination Team on:

Phone: 1800 634 035

Fax: (02) 6133 8442

Email: complaints@dss.gov.au

Online complaints form available on the Department's website (www.dss.gov.au)

Post: DSS Feedback, GPO Box 9820, Canberra ACT 2601

Please Note: Calls made to the 1800 634 035 number will be recorded to assist in the effective management of the complaint as well as for training purposes. Please advise the complaints officer if you do not wish to have your call recorded.

Any documents provided or created by the Department in the investigation and resolution of a complaint may be subject to release under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

If there is a concern with the way the Department has handled the complaint, a complaint can be made to the Commonwealth Ombudsman on:

Phone: 1300 362 072

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au

Post: GPO Box 442, CANBERRA ACT 2601

Website: www.ombudsman.gov.au

7. Contact Information

7.1 Funding Agreement Managers

Funding Agreement Managers are the first point of contact between service providers and the Department. They provide assistance with queries relating to planning, data and reporting, or any new issues that arise in the implementation or administration of the Reconnect program.

Correspondence regarding Reconnect policy should be emailed to the Reconnect Helpdesk at reconnect.policy@dss.gov.au.

7.2 Department's office locations

The Department's national number is **1300 653 227**. Call rates from landline and mobile providers may vary. Please check with your current service provider.

Department Office	Street address	Postal address
National Office	Enid Lyons Building 71 Athllon Drive Greenway ACT 2900	GPO Box 9820 Canberra ACT 2601
New South Wales	Tower B, Levels 8-9 280 Elizabeth Street Surry Hills, Sydney NSW 2010	GPO Box 9820 Sydney NSW 2001
Northern Territory	Level 7, Jacana House 39-41 Woods Street Darwin NT 0800	GPO Box 9820 Darwin NT 0801
Queensland	100 Creek Street Brisbane QLD 4000	GPO Box 9820 Brisbane QLD 4000
South Australia	Level 17, ATO Building 26 Franklin Street Adelaide SA 5000	GPO Box 9820 Adelaide SA 5001
Tasmania	Level 1 199 Collins Street Hobart TAS 7000	GPO Box 9820 Hobart TAS 7001
Victoria	Level 3 2 Lonsdale Street Melbourne VIC 3000	GPO Box 9820 Melbourne VIC 3001
Western Australia	Level 2 226 Adelaide Terrace Perth WA 6000	GPO Box 9820 Perth WA 6848

8. Annual budget line items

The Department may require, at its discretion, Reconnect service providers to submit a detailed budget.

8.1 Staffing costs

Direct service delivery staffing costs, including:

- staff salaries and on-costs / staff accruals
- professional development

- staff supervision costs
- training and conference expenses
- workers compensation
- superannuation
- job advertising

8.2 Operational costs

Costs associated with direct service delivery to program participants and divided as a proportion of all the funding received by the organisation:

- service delivery expenses
- insurance premiums
- activities expenses
- consultancies for the purposes of service activities
- community education
- delivery of training to clients
- information sessions, marketing / promotion and advertising
- support activities and other program development costs
- translation and interpreter services
- travel costs including travel expenses, cost associated with staff travel and motor vehicle leases for those vehicles used for direct service delivery

8.3 Administration costs

Administrative costs related to in delivering a service as a proportion of all funding received by the organisation:

- management service fee
- electricity and gas expenses
- telephone
- postage, printing, photocopying, stationery
- office equipment
- depreciation, maintenance and repairs of office equipment
- stores and other admin / operating costs
- computer software
- meeting costs
- equipment insurance
- legal expenses
- amenities
- library
- external audit and accounting services
- finance costs, bank charges and interest paid on overdraft

- organisational memberships and levies including that of peak bodies and other social services organisations and other operational expenses
- property costs: those costs associated with accommodation, rent, building insurance, cleaning, maintenance and repairs of buildings and grounds, rates and taxes, depreciation (property), and other property expenses
- insurance

8.4 Establishment costs for new Reconnect services

Establishment costs are intended for new Reconnect services or services that have minimal infrastructure and are provided at the Department’s discretion.

9. Definitions

9.1 Glossary of key terms

Term	Definition
Access	<p>Australian Government policy is aimed at ensuring that government services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are available to everyone who is entitled to them • are free of discrimination and irrespective of a person’s country of birth, language, gender, disability, culture, race or religion • take into account the needs and differences of Program participants
At risk groups	Groups or individuals identified as possibly having, or potentially developing, a problem (physical, mental or social) requiring further evaluation or intervention.
At risk (of homelessness)	See Section 9.2 Expanded definitions of key terms.
Audit	An examination and verification of the accounts, records, and procedures etc., of a service provider and conducted by a registered independent auditor, accountant, or official.
Auspice body	A non-government organisation that manages government funded Programs and is legally responsible for implementation and reporting requirements.
Brokerage	When a service provider pays for the services or goods of another organisation to assist a Program participant with particular needs.

Term	Definition
Capacity building	The process of developing knowledge and skills to enhance a community's ability to meet challenges. This may involve committed leadership, consultative decision-making, networking and the effective use of economic, environmental and social resources.
Case	Captures one or more instances or episodes of when a service is received by a client (or grouping of clients) for an in-scope program activity that is expected to lead to a distinct outcome.
Communities	A social unit with common rights or interests within a larger society; they are not only defined geographically.
Community capacity	A community's commitment, resources and skills that can be deployed to build on community strengths and address community problems and opportunities.
Community collaboration	Being involved in community based collective action and community development activities to improve community well-being.
Community development	Process by which communities and outside agencies plan, organise or implement improvements to community resources, facilities, economic conditions etc.
Community strength	The extent to which resources and processes within a community maintain and enhance individual and collective well-being in ways consistent with the principles of equity, comprehensiveness, participation, fulfilment of needs, self-reliance and social responsibility.
Consent	A Reconnect client provides consent to the collection of data relating to their personal demographics and circumstances.
Data	Information collected for a specific purpose.
Data Exchange (DEX)	DEX (Data Exchange) is the performance reporting solution developed by the Department in consultation with Reconnect service providers and clients, in response to the Australian Government's commitment to empower civil society organisations.
Department	The Australian Government Department of Social Services.

Term	Definition
Department Funding Agreement Manager	The Department's State/Territory Office staff member who liaises with Reconnect service providers on Grant Agreement requirements and monitors service performance.
Disadvantage	A social relationship in which the position of one person is worse because the position of another person is relatively better. People may be disadvantaged in many ways; in relation to poverty, the term refers to resources, opportunities and distribution of power.
Early intervention	See Section 9.2 Expanded definitions of key terms.
Family	Two or more people related by blood, marriage, adoption or fostering, who may or may not live together. For some cultures, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, family may also include those classified as 'extended family'.
Financial year	The twelve-month period from 1 July to 30 June.
First-to-know agencies	Agencies likely to be the first to identify young people or families having difficulties.
Freedom of Information	The principle that government activities are open to public scrutiny, as far as is reasonably possible, and permits public access to information held by the government.
Funding	Public money given to a service provider delivering the service outlined in the Grant Agreement and includes interest earned on the money.
Good Practice Principles	The processes or procedures that contribute to achieving the outcomes of a Program/Service Type.
Grant agreement	The legal contract between the Department and the auspice body/service provider that outlines service delivery, accountability and reporting requirements.
Holistic service delivery	Approaches to service delivery that recognise the range of factors affecting the lives of young people and their families.
Homeless – early intervention	See Section 9.2 Expanded definitions of key terms
Indigenous	A person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which they live.

Term	Definition
LGBTIQ	A person who identifies as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex or Queer
Newly arrived	A person who has been in Australia less than five years.
Non-engagement client	A non-engagement client is a person who requests to engage with a Reconnect service and does not meet the Program definitions of a target client.
Not for profit	An organisation where any profits generated are returned to further the work of the organisation, and not paid out to individuals or shareholders.
Organisation	Legal entity in the non-government sector.
Parent	A natural, step, adoptive or foster mother or father.
Partnership Approach	The partnership approach is an extended data set that providers share with the Department, intended as a genuine collaboration between government and the sector to exchange knowledge and share resources to inform service delivery.
Performance	The extent to which objectives or targets are achieved, the efficiency with which resources are allocated and the probity, equity and fairness with which outcomes are achieved.
Performance indicators	A set of measurements designed to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of a service in meeting objectives, producing outputs and achieving outcomes. In the Department's accrual accounting framework, performance indicators are made up of price, quantity, quality and, depending on delivery, funding criteria.
Population screening	An approach used in schools to identify which young people are at risk. The population screening approach using the Australian Index of Adolescent Development can provide information on students who would benefit from extra support.
Prevention	The implementation of activities to assist and support young people, families and/or communities before problems arise. See Section 9.2 Expanded definitions of key terms.
Probity	Conformity with standards of ethics, integrity, honesty, and propriety.
Program	Refers to the Reconnect program.

Term	Definition
Program evaluation	Evaluation of the process, effectiveness, cost benefit, or impact of programs, projects or services.
Program funding	The funding received from the Australian Government to provide the Program.
Reconnect client	Recipient of the Reconnect Program or Reconnect service delivered by a Reconnect service provider.
Reconnect Forums <i>Also known as Reconnect Network Meetings and Reconnect Interagency Meetings.</i>	Reconnect Forums bring Reconnect services and representatives from the Department together to discuss the operation of Reconnect, set direction and facilitate improved practice, share good practice and raise service and policy issues.
Refugee	See Section 9.2 Expanded definitions of key terms
Risk	The chance of something happening that will have an impact on objectives and is measured in terms of consequences and likelihood.
Service delivery	The activities undertaken by a service provider.
Service provider	The organisation (local government, community based, not-for-profit or for profit) funded by the Australian Government to provide a service to young people in accordance with a grant agreement.
Service stocktake	The service stocktake is a short set of broad questions about the conditions surrounding delivery of Reconnect services in that year
Service type	The type of service delivered under the Program, e.g. counselling
Stakeholders	Individuals, organisations or networks that have, or potentially have, a relationship or interest in the work undertaken by Reconnect service providers.
Target group	A target group is a group of people with a particular characteristic or set of characteristics which a Program or service seeks to assist.
Timely intervention	A timely intervention refers to measures taken to assist individual young people as soon as possible after the young person has become homeless or is perceptibly at risk of becoming homeless.

9.2 Expanded definitions of key terms

At risk (of homelessness)

In daily practice, Reconnect workers make judgements about 'risk' by taking into account a complex body of qualitative information about a young person's

circumstances. Central to this is the evidence of escalating family conflict or dysfunction and reduced tolerance. Other factors that need to be considered include deteriorating academic performance, truancy, personality changes, mood changes, acting out and risk taking behaviours, inappropriate peer groups and substance abuse.

Young people can also be at risk of homelessness if their living situation places them in danger of physical or mental harm. It is important to note that the living situation of a young person who is at risk can be volatile, and a young person can move from being housed to experiencing homelessness quickly.

Homelessness – prevention

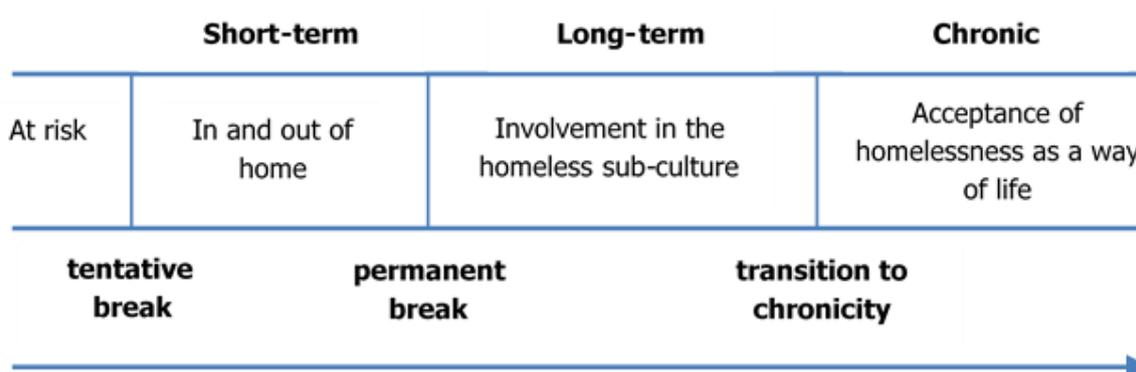
Prevention strategies are not necessarily targeted at specific individuals. Primary prevention strategies deal with social, economic and political causes of homelessness, and are typically outside the scope of Reconnect services.

Secondary prevention strategies, which are used by Reconnect services, focus on identifying young people perceptibly at risk of homelessness and strengthening their protective factors to enable them to remain engaged with school, community etc. For some specialist services, they may also apply prevention strategies aimed at young people experiencing homelessness to prevent their transition to chronicity.

Homelessness – early intervention

For Reconnect, early intervention for young people experiencing homelessness will occur prior to the young person making a permanent break from home or school.

The literature around youth homelessness generally accepts the process of homelessness displayed at the figure below:



Source: Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1998: 71)

It needs to be understood that even with these definitions there are grey areas for particular cases where prevention blurs with early intervention and vice versa.

Refugee

Young people can be defined as a refugee if:

- they were born overseas and
- they have entered Australia under the Humanitarian Program, and have a Humanitarian visa and
- are experiencing multiple barriers

Young asylum seekers living in the community under a community release Program are not eligible for Reconnect as they remain officially 'in detention' even though in a community setting, and have not been granted appropriate visas.

Reconnect service providers should contact the Department of Home Affairs if there is any question about the type of visa held by the young person, or the services they are able to access.

10. Version Control

Version	Changes	Approved by	Date
1	New version	Stewart Thomas Branch Manager Housing Programs and Homelessness, Department of Social Services	3 July 2018