



An overview of how Communities and Justice is applying the NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework

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Department of Communities and Justice

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Purpose of this overview

This document provides an overview of the NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework (the Outcomes Framework) and how it is being applied by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ). It will support our staff and partners to understand why and how we are using the Outcomes Framework to support our commissioning approach, and where they can find out more information.

While not mandatory, NSW Government agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are encouraged to use the Outcomes Framework to support the design, delivery and evaluation of their services. By applying the Outcomes Framework as part of our commissioning approach, DCJ and our service partners can clearly focus our activities towards achieving positive outcomes for our clients and for all people in NSW.

What is the NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework?

The NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework (the Outcomes Framework) sets out the population outcomes the NSW Government seeks to achieve in the delivery of human services. It was developed in consultation with NSW Government agencies and NGOs who deliver human services for the people of NSW, and was informed by national and international research on what determines a person's wellbeing.

The Outcomes Framework specifies seven wellbeing outcomes for the NSW population: Safety, Home, Economic, Health, Education and Skills, Social and Community, and Empowerment (Figure 1).

The Outcomes Framework is a starting point for thinking about what works in human service delivery. It expands the discussion from the outputs of service delivery (what's been done) to the outcomes of service delivery (what has been achieved).

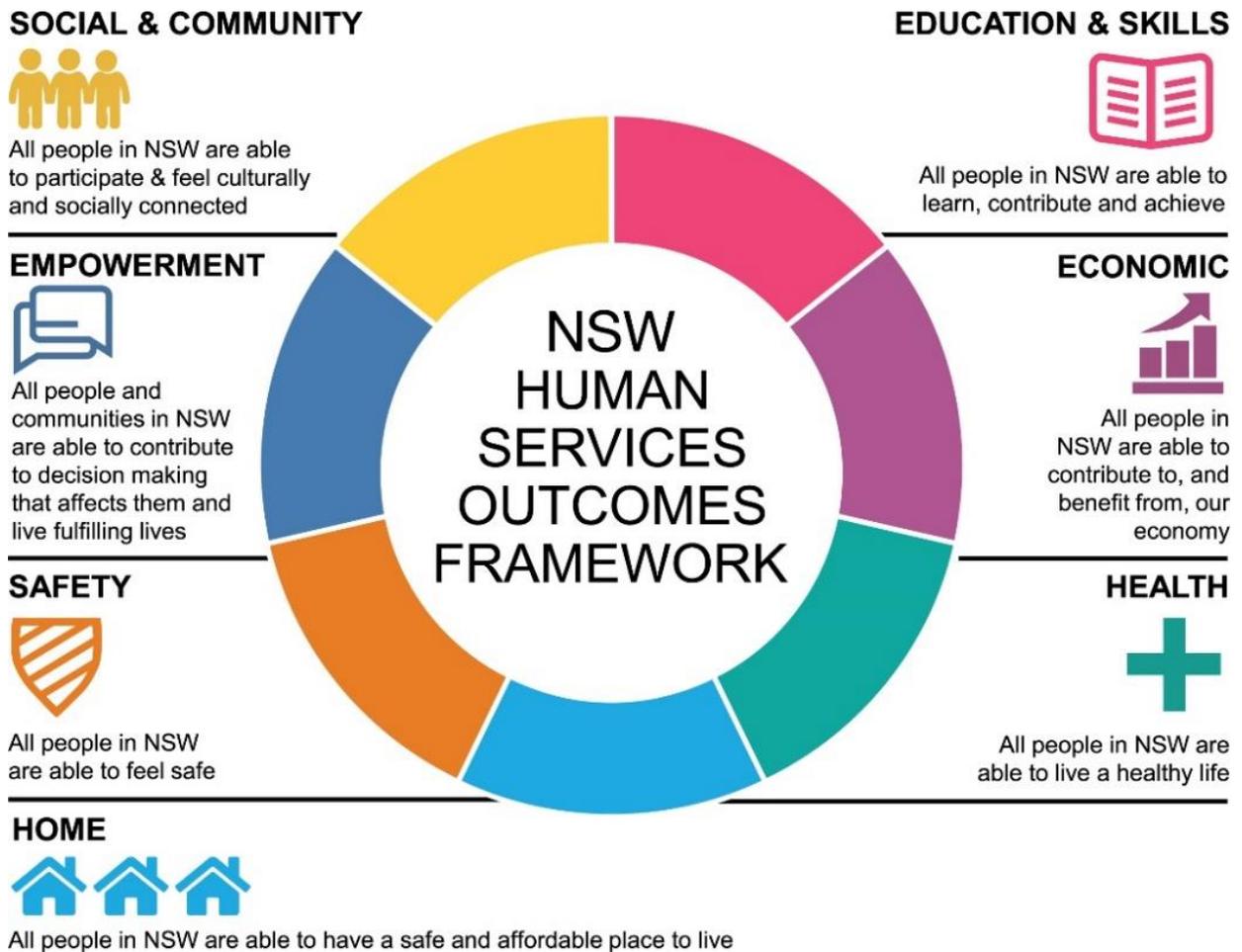
The cross-agency framework is intended to:

- build a common understanding of the outcomes which are priorities across NSW Government agencies and NGOs
- support human services agencies and NGOs to adopt an outcomes-focused approach
- promote consistency of measurement and evaluation of human services outcomes and activities
- foster innovation, learning and improvement
- encourage Government agencies and other organisations which deliver human services to work together more effectively
- assist operational staff to understand how their roles contribute to broader human services outcomes.

NSW Government agencies and NGOs are applying the Outcomes Framework and using outcomes and indicators in their strategic planning to build consistency across government, improve data collection and analysis and share information. The Outcomes Framework is flexible and designed to be improved and adapted as we learn over time.

A detailed guide on how to apply the cross-agency framework, developed by the former Department of Finance Services and Innovation, is available on our website [here](#).

Figure 1. The NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework



See our [NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework](#) webpage for more information and resources.

How does the Outcomes Framework support DCJs commissioning approach?

DCJ supports the most disadvantaged and vulnerable members of the community, often as the last resort when other services have failed. As part of our commissioning approach, we are using the Outcomes Framework to better guide our work to create a safe, just, resilient and inclusive NSW in which everyone has the opportunity to realise their potential.

Commissioning drives us to be disciplined in how we articulate outcomes, design our service responses using evidence, and measure the effectiveness of our services, all while working together with our clients and service partners. The Outcomes Framework assists DCJ’s commissioning approach by helping us to:

- **Focus** on the outcomes that matter most to clients’ long-term wellbeing.
- **Build** and use evidence about how to improve client wellbeing, so we can do more of what works and less of what doesn’t.
- **Measure** how successful we are in making long-term, positive differences to people’s lives.
- **Collaborate** with other Government agencies and partners to deliver more sustainable and meaningful impact.

Across DCJ the Outcomes Framework is embedded in how we design, implement, and evaluate programs and interventions. It helps build a link between client needs, what we do (our activities and interventions) and what we want to achieve (positive outcomes for clients).

The Outcomes Framework and our Commissioning approach are closely aligned and overlap in many ways (see the table below). Together, they support DCJ to deliver and commission quality outcomes-focused services that meet the long-term needs and aspirations of clients, in the most efficient and sustainable way.

DCJ Commissioning Principles	The NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework
<p>Client-centric: Having meaningful and culturally appropriate engagement with clients to ensure their feedback, needs and aspirations shape policy, service design and implementation.</p>	<p>It places the wellbeing of clients at the centre of everything we do. It enables us to focus on the outcomes that matter most to clients’ long-term wellbeing.</p>
<p>Integrated: Coordinating and integrating activities across DCJ together with service partners, to support delivery that improves outcomes for clients.</p>	<p>It enables us to collaborate with other Government agencies and service partners to deliver more sustainable and meaningful impact.</p>



Evidence-informed: Learning from programs, innovative pilots, literature and evaluation to inform future design and practice



It enables us to build and use evidence about how to improve client wellbeing, so we can do more of what works and less of what doesn't.

Outcomes-based: Focusing on the outcomes to be achieved, and being flexible about who delivers the services and how they deliver them.



It enables us to measure how successful we are in making a long-term, positive difference in people's lives.

Value for money: Delivery of quality services that meet the needs and aspirations of our clients in the most efficient and sustainable way.



It enables service providers to demonstrate that what they are doing works, so we can invest in the most effective programs.

How is DCJ applying the Outcomes Framework?

FACS Insights Analysis and Research (FACSIAR) has been leading work to apply the Outcomes Framework in DCJ. Together with partners across the organisation, we are undertaking a number of different activities to apply the Outcomes Framework. Figure 2 outlines the key elements of this work. All of these activities facilitate DCJs shift to a commissioning approach to service delivery that puts client outcomes at the centre.

Figure 2. How is DCJ applying the NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework?

<p>Identifying core outcomes and indicators</p>	<p>We have developed a core set of client outcomes and indicators to measure client wellbeing and the impact our programs and services have on our clients' lives. This work is ongoing and will involve further consultation with peaks and the sector.</p>
<p>Use evidence to inform decision-making</p>	<p>We enable DCJ staff and our partners to access and use research evidence and data to better understand client needs and the best ways to improve client outcomes.</p>
<p>Developing program logics</p>	<p>We use program logics to demonstrate how our services and programs lead to positive outcomes for DCJ clients.</p>

<p>Identifying and linking relevant datasets</p>	<p>We link our data with other government agencies for a more holistic view of client needs and outcomes.</p>
<p>Monitoring and evaluation</p>	<p>We conduct evaluations of our services and programs to measure the impact they have on our clients' lives. We use evaluation findings to improve our programs.</p>
<p>Public reporting</p>	<p>We publish outcome data so that providers and stakeholders know what is working, and where we need to improve.</p>

Identifying core client outcomes and indicators

In applying the Outcomes Framework, DCJ has been working to:

- develop a [common set of core client outcomes](#)
- refine impact pathways that link client outcomes together
- publish an indicator bank to help us measure client outcomes.

This work ensures that the wellbeing of DCJ clients is at the centre of program design and service delivery.

Identifying core outcomes for DCJ clients

DCJ has developed a core set of client outcomes. These outcomes are mapped to each of the seven outcome domains (see Figure 1). The core set of client outcomes help ensure that, together with our government and non-government partners, we are focused on achieving positive change for our clients. The core set of client outcomes also support us to have a common understanding of the outcomes that are priorities across our work, and to work together effectively to deliver benefits for the community.

The core client outcomes were identified through a review of documents relating to DCJ programs and previous work on the Outcomes Framework and consultations across DCJ program areas. Further consultations are underway with key stakeholders to test and, if needed, refine the core client outcomes.

Identifying impact pathways

Each of the seven outcome domains identified in the Outcomes Framework were linked together to create impact pathways (see Appendix 1). Impact pathways show the links within and between outcome domains - they demonstrate how improving an outcome can influence

and help achieve other outcomes. These outcomes might be in the same domain, or they might be in a different domain.

Impact pathways help us to:

- understand trajectories across the life-course
- understand people’s use of government services
- identify the outcomes that matter most to people
- focus on providing services that help achieve these outcomes.

The impact pathways in Appendix 1 were developed from a review of the best available evidence on what improves wellbeing for DCJ clients.

Developing an Outcome and Indicator Bank

Along with the core client outcomes set and impact pathways, outcome indicators have been identified to measure outcomes along these pathways to wellbeing.

When applying the Outcomes Framework in DCJ, indicators are used to determine if a service or program has achieved its intended outcomes. Indicators bring the Outcomes Framework to ‘life’ and enable DCJ to assess whether a person’s outcomes have improved over time as a result of the programs and services they have received.

DCJ will make the Client Outcome and Indicator Bank available to assist DCJ staff and partners to identify relevant outcomes and indicators to measure client outcomes. The Client Outcome and Indicator Bank will not be exhaustive and will be built upon over time.

For more information about *impact pathways, outcome indicators and measures* please see [Applying the NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework in Communities and Justice: Key Terms and Concepts](#) and the [Glossary of Terms](#).

Visit our [Core Client Outcomes and Indicators](#) page for more information.

Using evidence to inform decision-making

When working towards improving client outcomes, it is important to use high-quality evidence to inform program design and delivery and decision-making. This ensures that client needs are being met in the best possible way. When applying the Outcomes Framework within a commissioning approach to service delivery, evidence is used to understand the needs of clients, and to identify risk and protective factors and what interventions have been shown to improve client wellbeing.

FACSIAR undertakes a number of different activities to support DCJ to use evidence. For example:

- We work with partners across DCJ to embed the use of evidence in program design (e.g. using program logics) and to ensure that DCJ staff have the skills to understand and use evidence in their work.

- We conduct, commission and disseminate literature reviews, systematic evidence reviews and other publications to ensure DCJ staff and stakeholders have the best available evidence to use in their work.
- We use the FACSIAR Need Model to help DCJ staff understand the complex and overlapping needs of our clients so we can effectively allocate and design services to support them.
- We use the Child Protection Investment Model to help DCJ staff better understand client journeys and service usage so we can invest early to improve long-term outcomes for children and their families.

We are supported in this evidence work by our partners in the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) and Corrections Research Evaluation and Statistics (CRES).

Developing program logics

A program logic is a tool used to design a program or intervention that seeks to effect change, that is, to improve client outcomes. Using a program logic approach is instrumental to applying the Outcomes Framework as it enables us to demonstrate the link between need, existing evidence, the proposed program/intervention and the desired outcomes.

DCJ uses evidence-based outcomes-focused program logics to design programs and services. This approach supports us to use high-quality evidence of what works and enables us to prioritise activities that are most likely to work best for our clients. It also supports us to modify or stop activities that don't work.

Appendix 2 illustrates a program logic template used in DCJ.

For more information on developing program logics, please see FACSIAR's step-by-step guide to [Developing Program Logics](#). Our program logic template can also be found [online](#).

Identifying and linking relevant data sets

The DCJ Commissioning Framework sets out clear priorities focused on improving the long term outcomes for clients. The principles underpinning commissioning include being client-centric, outcomes based and evidence informed. In order to measure client outcomes long term, we need to link DCJ administrative data with the data of other NSW and Commonwealth agencies. The Outcomes Framework can help us do this by making these long term client outcomes clear and identifying relevant data linkage opportunities.

Data linkage enables us to see how our programs benefit the educational and health outcomes of our clients, for example. It also supports us to better understand how our clients interact with the service system. It provides a holistic view of client needs and outcomes and supports us to better target services and interventions for our clients.

There are a range of projects currently underway or in development that involve linking DCJ data within our organisation and linking data from other government agencies (both state and Commonwealth) and universities. For example, FACSIAR is currently working on linking data

with the Department of Education to investigate the education outcomes of children and young people in Out-of-Home-Care using NAPLAN participation and performance results.

DCJ is also working on linking data with the Departments of Education and Health to further analyse the intergenerational links in child protection in NSW. Analysing the pathways that children and young people take, can provide a number of benefits to young people, and their families as it allows DCJ to deliver more effective services.

Rigorous evaluation and monitoring

Evaluation helps us understand whether our programs and interventions have a positive impact on client outcomes. Within DCJ, the Outcomes Framework is used to ensure evaluations:

- demonstrate which programs and interventions are meeting client needs, by clearly aligning the aims, outputs, outcomes and outcome indicators of programs and interventions
- collect baseline data and consistently monitor and measure the progress/impact of an intervention throughout its implementation
- collect data on the effectiveness of an intervention from the client perspective
- estimate the attribution of positive outcomes to specific programs or activities
- improve consistency in data collection across services providers
- increase capability for reporting local data back to service providers to inform service improvement.

The evaluation and monitoring of programs and interventions are essential steps in the Commissioning Framework. FACSIAR alongside BOCSAR and CRES are currently working to support DCJ staff to embed high-quality evaluation in program design and delivery. We provide advice on evaluation design and implementation, connect DCJ staff to useful resources, and facilitate evaluation capacity building. This work ensures DCJ programs and initiatives are working toward the same client outcomes and applying rigorous evaluation methods.

Increasing accountability through public reporting

We have an obligation to collect information for the purposes of public reporting. It is our intention to use the Outcomes Framework to report against each outcome domain at a population cohort and district or local geographic level so that areas with similar characteristics can assess their outcomes together. Focusing on the outcome domains will help build a common understanding across agencies and NGOs of how working together can contribute to a common achievement of outcomes.

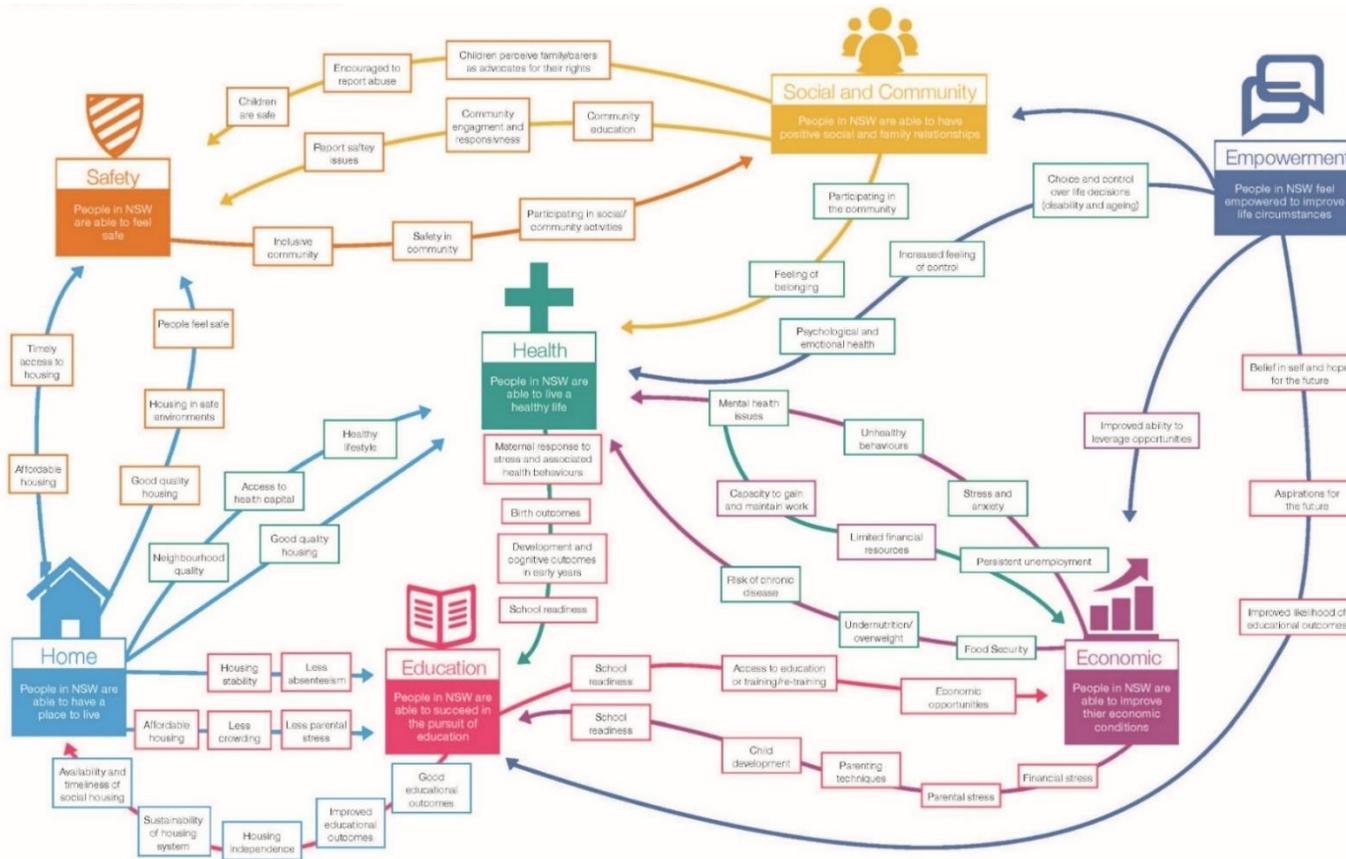
Next steps

The Outcomes Framework supports the DCJ Commissioning approach to service delivery by helping place the life outcomes of clients at the core of service delivery and bringing rigour and consistency to how we measure our impact. In 2020–21, we will focus on:

- finalising an agreed set of core client outcomes and indicators
- supporting the use of indicators to measure client outcomes
- coordinating with our partners in BOCSAR and CRES about applying the Outcomes Framework across DCJ clients
- upskilling DCJ staff to use evidence and data to inform decision-making
- ensuring DCJ staff have access to high-quality evidence to use in their work
- supporting DCJ to commission, measure and pay for outcomes from service providers
- continuing major data linkage projects
- outcome evaluations in our key program areas
- supporting Aboriginal Outcomes.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Impact pathway butterfly model



Appendix 2. Program Logic Template

PROBLEM	EVIDENCE	INTERVENTION Core components and flexible activities	MECHANISMS OF CHANGE	OUTPUTS	CLIENT OUTCOMES Describe the specific client outcomes likely to result from each program component. Align these to relevant NSW Human Services Outcome Framework domains (Home, Safety, Education and Skills, Economic, Health, Social and Community and Empowerment).		
					Short-term outcomes Primarily attributed to the program	Medium-term outcomes Partly attributed to program, beginning of shared attribution	Long-term outcomes Shared attribution across agencies/NGOs
<p>Identify the problem areas this program seeks to change by completing a needs assessment. This should include evidence based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population level data Client level data Community perspectives Client perspectives Staff perspectives (DCJ and NGO) <p>Be as specific as possible I.e. Describe the population group or cohort, delivery setting, client needs or risk factors experienced by this population group.</p>	<p>Summarise the research evidence on the most effective programs, and/or program components, available to change the identified problems. Please start with evidence from published systematic reviews and high quality randomised controlled trials that demonstrate effectiveness. Please also include relevant evaluation reports.</p> <p>Note: FACSIAR Library can assist in providing relevant research evidence including literature searches Library@facs.nsw.gov.</p>	<p>Based on the identified problems and what the evidence suggests is the most effective way to intervene to change these problems, describe what your program will look like.</p> <p>Describe the core components and the flexible activities attached to each of these components.</p> <p>Describe the inputs (resources) needed for each activity.</p> <p>There is no limit to how many core components or activities you can include.</p>	<p>Describe how the program will specifically achieve the desired outcomes via the program activities.</p>	<p>The products and/or services delivered to achieve the short-term outcomes? (e.g. fact sheets distributed, number of staff attending training, number of support sessions completed)</p>			