

*“We kept changing;
they kept changing
with us.”*

Evaluation of Melbourne City Mission’s Amplify Program

Final Report

June 2025

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Key definitions and concepts

Young person	<p>The Amplify Program works specifically with young people aged 15 to 19 years of age. Accordingly, this age group is the focus of the evaluation.</p> <p>We acknowledge, however, that the systemic barriers to seeking safety and shelter described in the report impact unaccompanied young people more broadly – including those falling outside of the program’s target age range. The focus on young people aged 15 to 19 is in no way intended to diminish the experiences of young people who fall outside of this age range, or to suggest that they would not benefit from access to the Amplify program or similar specialist supports for unaccompanied young people with interrelated experiences of family violence and homelessness.</p> <p>We also note that the program does accept young people outside the target age range in limited circumstances, including where they have recently aged out of the out-of-home care system or where, for developmental reasons, they are unable to be supported by wider programs and supports.</p>
Unaccompanied	<p>An ‘unaccompanied’ young person refers to any young person who presents to the service system without a protective parent or other guardian. The term can encompass a breadth of circumstances, including young people who have left the family home; those who remain at home but do not have a parent who is able to act protectively towards them; and young people in the out-of-home care system experiencing placement breakdown or otherwise presenting to the service system alone. It also includes young people with children of their own, where the young person is not supported by a protective parent.</p>
Family violence	<p>In line with Victoria’s legislated definition, ‘family violence’ encompasses behaviours that are physically or sexually abusive, emotionally or psychologically abusive, economically abusive, threatening, coercive or other behaviours that control, dominate and cause fear.</p> <p>Family violence may occur within a young person’s family of origin, family of choice and/or an intimate partner relationship, and may occur across multiple relationships, either simultaneously or at different points in the young person’s life.</p>
Homelessness	<p>Homelessness means being without a secure, stable and private space to live. It can include circumstances such as sleeping rough, couch surfing, and living in temporary or unsafe housing situations such as rooming houses, cars or crisis accommodation.</p>

Acronyms

ACCO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
AOD	Alcohol and Other Drugs
AVITH	Adolescent Violence in the Home
CIJ	Centre for Innovative Justice
FVIO	Family Violence Intervention Order
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, Intersex and Asexual
MARAM	Victoria's Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management framework
MCM	Melbourne City Mission
RAMP	Risk Assessment and Management Panel

Executive Summary

Melbourne City Mission (MCM) has driven, alongside family violence researchers and youth advocates, a growing awareness of the needs, experiences and service trajectories of young people who present to the service system as a result of interrelated experiences of family violence and homelessness without the support of a protective parent ('unaccompanied young people').

Despite renewed policy focus since *Victoria's Royal Commission into Family Violence* (2016) on children and young people as 'victim survivors in their own right', evidence suggests that young people generally, and unaccompanied young people in particular, are routinely failed by existing service responses.

Research published by MCM in 2021 found that young people aged 15 to 19 are especially likely to fall through the gaps. This research highlighted that unaccompanied young people presenting to the family violence system, at best, received responses that were not developmentally appropriate and able to respond to their needs. More often, however, unaccompanied young people were being referred into youth homelessness services for a generalist youth homelessness response. For some young people, the absence of appropriate referral pathways simply meant that they were excluded from services altogether or did not have their family violence risk identified and addressed.

In response to these significant gaps in Victoria's service response for unaccompanied young people, MCM secured funding from Family Safety Victoria and the Commonwealth National Partnership Agreement to develop and pilot a youth-specific family violence case management and capacity building program for young people presenting to the service system without a protective parent. Service delivery commenced in February 2024, with the initial pilot funded until end June 2025.

At the outset of the pilot period, the Centre for Innovative Justice (CIJ) was engaged to evaluate the program's implementation, appropriateness and effectiveness, as well as to distil key learnings from the pilot period about the needs and experiences of unaccompanied young people and the broader system response. Data collection and analysis was qualitative in focus, and included interviews with young people supported through the Amplify program; practitioner focus groups; and de-identified program data and detailed client case studies.

This Final Evaluation Report sets out findings from fifteen months of service delivery and proposes future directions to strengthen the program and ensure that it is able to continue to deliver substantial improvements in safety for young people whose needs would otherwise go unmet.

Evaluation findings

Overall, the evaluation found that the Amplify Program has been successfully implemented and clearly responds to the needs of unaccompanied young people, addressing a critical system gap.

The evaluation also found that the program is continually demonstrating capacity to achieve immediate and intermediate outcomes in relation to identifying, validating, making sense of and responding to unaccompanied young people's experiences of family violence, including ongoing family violence risk. These achievements have been able to occur in the context of entrenched, systemic barriers which impede the capacity of unaccompanied young people to access key supports and entitlements, including family violence-related entitlements.

In the absence of the program's intensive, holistic support, the evaluation found that these barriers would almost certainly mean that young people remain unseen and at risk of ongoing harm. Specific findings relating to the evaluation's four domains of inquiry are set out below.

Implementation

The evaluation found that the Amplify Program was able to be implemented rapidly, achieving its service targets and consistently operating at capacity. The evaluation identified several enablers of the program's successful implementation, which should remain a focus if the program is scaled up or expanded in the future.

First and foremost, the centring of young people's voices and lived experiences across program design and delivery was a distinguishing feature of the Amplify program. This built on MCM's existing commitment to embedding lived experience across its operations, alongside the organisation's established mechanisms and frameworks for engaging with young people in a safe, supported way. The emphasis on young people's voices spanned initial program design through to the current evaluation, which aimed to centre the voices of Amplify clients.

MCM were able to recruit specialist staff with significant family violence expertise, drawn from both professional and lived experience. The evaluation identified a deep, team-wide culture of inclusivity and a shared commitment to young person-centred practice – both of which stood out as key strengths of the program. The program's approach to professional development and wellbeing evolved over the pilot period, with MCM incorporating external clinical supervision and specialised professional development opportunities to reflect the level of risk being managed by the program.

The Amplify program was able to establish clear and effective referral pathways, including by actively building the capacity of referring programs to identify and assess young people's family violence risk through formal training and secondary consultation. While demand was generally able to be managed through a dynamic approach to caseloads, the program team were required to maintain a waitlist for the duration of the pilot period. Ongoing monitoring of program resourcing was, therefore, identified as an important consideration to maintain the program's positive impact on young people, while also supporting the wellbeing of program staff.

The capacity of the program team to respond to the breadth of needs with which unaccompanied young people presented was enhanced through formal partnerships with wider services, including a specialist family violence service. These partnerships facilitated access to key family violence-related entitlements, such as flexible support packages and crisis accommodation, as well as providing important opportunities for knowledge sharing across sectors.

Finally, while the capacity of the Amplify program to improve young people's access to safe, appropriate housing was not in scope for the program or the evaluation, this was identified as a significant contributing factor in the program's capacity to address family violence risk.

Appropriateness

The evaluation found that the support delivered through the Amplify Program was highly appropriate for unaccompanied young people presenting to the service system as a result of interrelated experiences of family violence and homelessness. Multiple features of the model emerged as being highly responsive to the needs of the target cohort, features which are generally not available through existing service offerings within the specialist family violence and/or youth homelessness systems.

Key features of the model which underpin its capacity to respond in meaningful ways to unaccompanied young people are as follows:

- The capacity building support provided by Amplify practitioners to wider MCM services and external practitioners was found to be instrumental in enabling non-specialist practitioners and programs to recognise where family violence was occurring and connect young people with appropriate support and referrals. This was seen as particularly important given the relative invisibility of unaccompanied young people within the wider service system, as well as the frequency with which their experiences are minimised, undermined or simply not identified.
- The high level of family violence specialisation and commitment to trauma-informed and healing-oriented practice within the Amplify program team was central to the program's ability to respond effectively to dynamic risk and complex client presentations. This included capacity to provide psychoeducational support and to manage multiple forms of risk that stemmed, directly and indirectly, from young people's experiences of family violence. These multiple forms of risk included risk posed by a person using violence, mental health risk and risks associated with homelessness.
- Every aspect of the program's delivery was developmentally appropriate, including the adoption of flexible, client-centred ways of working and robust, readiness-informed case management. This meant that the Amplify program was able to work with young people in an affirming way and add to the wider system response by leveraging and complementing available supports, rather than duplicating or contributing to service overwhelm. External practitioners observed that the capacity of the model to work flexibly and intensively set it apart from other services and promoted meaningful, trusting relationships with young people whose previous service interactions had frequently been negative or harmful.
- While not a formal feature of the model, the culture of the Amplify program was found to be inclusive, non-judgemental and de-stigmatising – providing young people with a safe space in which they could share and reflect on their experiences of harm and begin to explore their longer-term goals and aspirations. The embedding of peer support was found to be an essential feature both of this culture and of the broader program, with this role able to support young people to navigate environments and service settings where they otherwise felt unsafe, uncomfortable or triggered.
- On balance, the embedding of the Amplify program within a youth homelessness service was found to be beneficial – both in terms of enabling program staff to engage quickly with young people where they present in crisis as well as by facilitating effective collaboration with homelessness and housing programs. Crucially, more than half of program referrals came through the Frontyard access point, indicating that Amplify's co-location model within Frontyard means that young people are frequently being connected with specialist family violence support when they first present to the youth homelessness system.

Overall, the evaluation strongly identified that the design and operationalisation of the Amplify Program is deeply informed by the needs, experiences and service preferences of unaccompanied young people, which in turn led to a range of positive outcomes for young people supported through the program.

Effectiveness

As a starting point, the evaluation found strong evidence that the Amplify program was able to identify unaccompanied young people with interrelated experiences of family violence and homelessness successfully and then connect them with support. For a cohort whose risk and needs are often invisible to the service system, this emerged as a key foundational outcome.

One of the strongest outcomes identified through the evaluation was the success of the Amplify program in recognising young people's experiences of family violence. This was found to be a particularly critical element of the program when young people had experiences of being undermined or disbelieved in previous service system interactions – with young people who participated in interviews reporting that their engagement with the Amplify program was the first time that they had felt listened to and validated by any service.

The evaluation also found that the Amplify program is having a clear and direct impact on young people's capacity to engage with wider supports and to build protective and stabilising factors in their lives. The capacity of the Amplify program team to scaffold safe access to wider services emerged as particularly important, with countless examples of the program advocating to ensure a continued lens on both young people's family violence risk, as well as the young person's own goals and preferences. While school engagement was consistently identified as a key area of support with which Amplify practitioners were assisting, other examples included re-engagement with hobbies, positive relationships, engagement with mental health supports and the development of healthy coping mechanisms. All of these contributed to young people being able to enjoy a 'normal' adolescence and to feel positive and hopeful about their future.

Another key outcome was the capacity of the Amplify program to support young people to reflect on and make sense of their experiences of harm. This support was instrumental for young people who had normalised experiences of family violence over time, or who had blamed themselves for the harm that they had endured. As well as laying the foundations for young people to recover and heal from previous experiences of harm, the evaluation suggested that the psychoeducational support delivered through the program could also reduce the likelihood of future harm, by building young people's capacity to recognise and name experiences of violence across other relationships.

Crucially, the evaluation found that the Amplify program was often able to reduce family violence risk and improve safety – despite persistent, limited access to key supports, including rapid re-housing, for some young people supported through the program. Consistent with the program's client-led approach, strategies to reduce family violence risk were varied and included:

- providing safety planning where young people needed to return home to retrieve belongings;
- conducting 'tech sweeps' to mitigate the risk of technology-enabled surveillance or pursuit by a person using violence;
- advocating for priority access to refuge (including adult family violence refuge placements);
- advocating for separate refuge placements where young people experiencing intimate partner violence had been placed with their partner;
- advocating to services, including refuges and Centrelink, who wanted to contact an adult perpetrator to seek consent to engage with a young person, verify a disclosure made by the young person (about that adult), or otherwise communicate with them about the young person's whereabouts and attempts to engage with services;
- supporting young people named on Family Violence Intervention Orders (FVIOs) who were fearful of police to feel confident reporting breaches;

- consulting with specialist family violence Risk Assessment and Management Panel (RAMP) co-ordinators for young people who are experiencing particularly high-risk family violence; and
- engaging in thorough safety planning to support safe, client-led reunification with family members where there had been a rupture or relationship breakdown.

Alongside its capacity to respond to and meaningfully reduce family violence risk, the evaluation also found that the program is working to reduce mental health risks, including in relation to suicidality and self-harm. This occurred in multiple ways, including by creating safe opportunities for young people to have conversations about trauma and its impacts. Given the rates of suicide among young people experiencing homelessness, this emerged as a critical outcome.

Finally, unintended outcomes identified through the evaluation were uniformly positive. The evaluation found that, despite it being out of scope, the program is actively contributing to improved housing outcomes. The program also played an important role in identifying and rectifying misidentification of young people as the predominant aggressor or person using violence, as well as repairing young people's trust in the service system, and thus their willingness to help-seeking and engage with supports. Finally, some young people who had achieved safety and stability through the program's intervention went on to engage in advocacy and professional lived experience work.

Learning

The evaluation found that the Amplify Program is contributing to the generation of new knowledge about best practice ways of working with young people who have intersecting needs associated with family violence and homelessness. This knowledge was found to have strengthened the delivery of the program, and in some cases, to have also strengthened system-wide responses to a cohort that too often remains unseen.

The program delivery and associated evaluation highlighted the unique nature of young people's experiences of family violence, including the significant level of risk that they face and the ways in which this risk is poorly understood across the service system. In the absence of the Amplify program, this poor understanding of risk – and its changing profile as young people move from situations of immediate family violence into homelessness or unsafe housing as well as the mental health toll of these cumulative experiences – was found to result in young people being excluded from services or receiving inadequate support.

Linked to this, the evaluation found that unaccompanied young people often had significant histories of negative service interactions. This was characterised by the repeated minimisation of their experiences of harm by services, as well as service or system collusion with adult perpetrators in the context of services seeking parental consent.

Practitioners described young people experiencing high levels of service activity without any meaningful response or change in their safety – including cycles of Child Protection opening, investigating and closing files without providing support. These negative service interactions often inhibited help-seeking and disclosure, compounding the invisibility of unaccompanied young people (and their experiences of family violence risk and harm) across the service system.

Overall, the Amplify Program has continued to surface and respond to critical system gaps for unaccompanied young people – including those which exist by design, as well as those which result from inadequate resourcing across the service system generally.

These gaps meant that, even where a dedicated program such as Amplify is available to unaccompanied young people, the capacity of the program to address young people's needs through referrals, advocacy and case management can be limited. As a result, young people remained open in case management for longer than anticipated and often Amplify practitioners were left holding significant mental health, homelessness and alcohol and drug risk, alongside family violence risk.

Strengthening the Amplify Program

Alongside maintaining and strengthening those elements that the evaluation found to be central to the program's capacity to improve outcomes for unaccompanied young people, the evaluation identified a series of recommendations to scale up the Amplify Program moving forward.

1. Continue and expand funding of the Amplify program.
2. Review the Amplify program's resourcing model to reflect program scope more appropriately, including service delivery and capacity building elements of the model.
3. Extend program timeframes from four months to a minimum of six months, with capacity to provide step-down support up to one-year where required.
4. Consider expanding the program's age range, including to work with young people up to and including (at minimum) 21 years of age.
5. Ensure that any future funding for the program includes dedicated resourcing for clinical supervision and reflective practice, complemented by strong partnerships with specialist family violence services.
6. Incorporate dedicated, crisis brokerage to address material support needs of program clients, including where they have not yet been able to access flexible support packages and other key entitlements.
7. Work with Family Safety Victoria to identify and address barriers to timely information sharing by the program.
8. Actively monitor the capacity of the program to work in culturally safe and responsive ways with First Nations young people and young people from culturally and racially marginalised communities.

Conclusion

Overall, the evaluation has identified a clear, urgent need for the Amplify program, with few (if any) appropriate service pathways available in Victoria to unaccompanied young people presenting because of their interrelated experiences of family violence and homelessness. The evaluation found across multiple examples that, in the absence of the Amplify Program, young people simply would have remained at high risk of serious harm or lethality – whether that meant remaining in (or returning to) the situation of family violence for which they had first presented or being forced into other unsafe situations.

The evaluation found that the Amplify program is highly responsive to the needs of its client cohort, successfully delivering an integrated family violence and youth homelessness response that is tailored to young people while maintaining a lens on family violence risk. The program has demonstrated strong evidence of effectiveness, both in directly increasing safety for young people and building the capacity of wider services to respond to this cohort. Despite entrenched, systemic barriers to entering the housing system, the program has also worked, wherever possible, to remove barriers to accessing safe, stable accommodation. The program does so in recognition that, where young people are not able to access alternative accommodation and housing, they remain at ongoing risk of returning to situations of violence and harm.

Overwhelmingly, the evaluation points to a need to fund the Amplify Program on a continuing basis, including through additional investment to expand its capacity to respond to unaccompanied young people. In its absence, Victoria's stated commitment to recognising children and young people as victim survivors in their own right will not be fully realised, nor translate to increased safety for young people who present to the service system without a protective parent. Accordingly, the Amplify Program represents an opportunity to disrupt trajectories of harm and to ensure that a cohort that has previously had little voice in the service system is finally seen and heard.

1 Introduction

This section outlines the background to the evaluation, as well as the evaluation scope, objectives and limitations.

1.1 Background to the evaluation

1.1.1 Policy context

In the year ending March 2025, 15,621 Affected Family Members in a police-attended family violence incident in Victoria were aged 15-24.ⁱ The true prevalence of family violence against young people is likely much higher, as these incidents are underreported, and young people are more likely than others to seek help informally rather than presenting to police or a social service.ⁱⁱ

Although young victim survivors of family violence show great resilience and resourcefulness, the impacts of family violence on young people can have devastating consequences for their physical and mental health (including suicidality),ⁱⁱⁱ their educational attainment and employment, and their housing outcomes.^{iv} Indeed, family violence is a leading cause of homelessness among young people.^v Snapshot data from Melbourne City Mission (MCM), the leading provider of youth homelessness programs across Victoria, indicate that in 2024 at least 82 percent of young people supported through youth homelessness programs experienced family violence growing up.^{vi}

Many young people experiencing family violence cannot access the support and shelter that they need to stay safe and recover. In 2016, Victoria's *Royal Commission into Family Violence* ('the Royal Commission') found that there was no system-wide recognition of children and young people as victim survivors of family violence in their own right and that child- and youth-centred family violence responses were missing.^{vii} As such, one of the Royal Commission's 227 recommendations was for the provision of age-appropriate crisis accommodation, therapeutic support and increased protection for young people experiencing family violence (as well as dedicated crisis accommodation linked with therapeutic support for young people using violence at home, which generally occurs as a result of their own experiences of harm).^{viii}

Although the Victorian Government increased investment in broader youth homelessness accommodation – including funding for services delivered by MCM – this investment did not extend to family violence specific accommodation attached to therapeutic supports.

Following the Royal Commission, the Victorian Government established *Ending family violence - Victoria's 10-year plan for change* and has published two Rolling Action Plans to enact the Royal Commission's recommendations. The most recent plan highlights young victim survivors of family violence as a priority cohort.^{ix} Likewise, in 2024, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet commissioned a *Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches* identified critical gaps in national responses to children and young people who have experienced family violence, calling for a "strategic and coordinated approach to recognising children and young people as victim survivors in their own right".^x

Greater policy recognition, however, does not appear to have translated into greater investment in, and establishment of, dedicated or specialist family violence service responses for young people – particularly those who present to services without a protective parent.

In 2021, MCM published the *Amplify Report*, a research report which surveyed Victoria's policy and service responses to young people experiencing family violence, as well as consulting with young people and the practitioners who support them. The report found that, although Victoria had made significant changes to its family violence system since the Royal Commission, young people, especially those aged 15 to 19 without a protective parent, were still falling through the gaps.^{xi}

The report identified an absence of youth-specific risk assessment and safety planning tools, as well as appropriate, dedicated referral pathways for young people disclosing family violence, who tend to be referred into homelessness responses that are designed for adults and accompanied children. The report emphasised that, while young people accompanied by a protective parent (especially a mother) may have access to crisis accommodation through specialist family violence services, these services are often primarily designed to assist mothers and are not always suitable for young people presenting alone, particularly young men and LGBTQIA+ young people.^{xii}

The report also noted that, when young people do present directly to youth crisis accommodation services, the practitioners supporting them often do not have the capacity, capability or resources to manage family violence risk and support recovery, including by accessing key supports such as family violence crisis brokerage.^{xiii} Youth crisis accommodation environments are also generally not purposefully designed, in the way that refuges for women and children experiencing family violence are designed, to reduce family violence risk. Further options such as crisis placement in hotels also tend to be unavailable to this cohort because of concerns around safety, suitability and duty of care.

Young people experiencing family violence who are aged 15 and over were also identified in the report as being unlikely to receive support and intervention from Child Protection services because of their age.^{xiv} Further, while young victim survivors who also use violence may be referred to Adolescent Violence in the Home (AVITH) programs – which typically acknowledge that young people who use violence in the home have also often experienced family violence and respond accordingly – young victim survivors who do not use violence at home as a response to their experiences of harm cannot access this particular support.^{xv}

Overall, the report pointed to a patchwork of services with variable capacity to respond to young people's unique needs and few (if any) dedicated pathways for young people who experience family violence and flee without a protective parent.

1.1.2 Development of the Amplify Program

Following the report's release, MCM secured funding from Family Safety Victoria and the Commonwealth National Partnership Agreement to develop and pilot a youth-specific family violence case management and capacity building program. The aim of the program was to support young people aged 15 to 19 who present to the service system unaccompanied because of their interrelated experiences of family violence and homelessness ('unaccompanied young people').

MCM worked with a group of young people with lived (and living) experience to design a program model that could respond to the service gaps identified through the *Amplify Report*. This included through the direct provision of family violence case management to unaccompanied young people who are experiencing high levels of family violence risk, as well as the provision of capacity building support to other services working with this cohort.

Service delivery commenced in late February 2024, with initial pilot funding concluding in June 2025. As of the time of writing, a brief funding extension has been granted beyond this period.

1.2 Evaluating the Amplify Program

Following the award of funding for the Amplify Program, MCM engaged the Centre for Innovative Justice (CIJ) to undertake an evaluation. A comprehensive *Monitoring and Evaluation Framework* was developed in early 2024, which underpins this evaluation report.

1.2.1 Evaluation objectives

The objectives of the evaluation of the Amplify Program are:

- to strengthen the design, **implementation** and delivery of the program;
- to assess the **effectiveness** and **appropriateness** of the program in delivering specialist case management support to unaccompanied young people and building the capacity of wider practitioners to support this cohort; and
- to articulate what is being **learned** through the pilot about ‘what works’ when supporting unaccompanied young people experiencing family violence and homelessness.

The evaluation aims to have a strong focus on enablers and barriers to achieving positive outcomes for young people. This is in recognition that the program’s capacity to effect change will be impacted by wider system capacity to respond to the needs of unaccompanied young people, including the availability of appropriate housing and accommodation options for young people.

1.2.2 Evaluation scope

In seeking to achieve these objectives, the evaluation adopted a mixed-methods approach to data collection. This included interviews with young people supported through the program; the development of illustrative case studies (based on client record data); practitioner focus groups; and a review of program documentation and de-identified service data (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Overview of evaluation methods



Source: Centre for Innovative Justice.

Intended outcomes were purposefully designed to reflect the time-limited nature of the intervention – for example, that young people feel validated; more able to make decisions about their future; and are supported to build protective, stabilising factors in their lives. Short-term, intermediate and end-of-program outcomes are set out in the program’s Theory of Change (see **Appendix A**).

1.2.2.1 Limitations

It was not an aim of the evaluation to assess actual improvements to long-term safety, given that this was unlikely to be measurable over the pilot period. Instead, the evaluation focussed on evidence of incremental steps towards safety – all of which are still crucial for a cohort that has historically been invisible to the service system and without specialist support in relation to their interrelated experiences of family violence and homelessness.

Similarly, the measurement of outcomes relating to young people's access to safe, stable housing were determined to be out-of-scope, given the limited capacity of the program to address the significant under-supply of housing at the present time.

The evaluation aimed to engage with six to 12 young people through client interviews, ultimately achieving a sample of five. Despite not reaching the target sample size, the qualitative findings in these five interviews were significant in the context of the program's client cohort, particularly given the evaluation team was only looking to engage with young people whose case files were either closed or almost closed. The smaller than anticipated sample size is also a reflection of the fact that many Amplify clients were focusing on attending school or work at the point of program exit, and didn't always have capacity to engage, either emotionally or logistically, in an interview about their experiences. Across the interviews that did occur, however, the evaluation team identified strikingly similar themes, despite the unique circumstances of each young person interviewed.

Interviews were therefore complemented by ten detailed case studies, developed by Amplify practitioners based on client record data and practice observations, which further illustrated the needs, experiences and service trajectories of young people supported through the program. As such, the evaluation findings were underpinned by rich, qualitative data informed by the experiences of 15 young people supported through the program.

1.3 Structure of the report

This report provides an overview of emerging findings from the evaluation. It comprises the following sections:

- **Section 1 (Introduction)** – sets out the background to the evaluation, as well as the evaluation scope, objectives and limitations;
- **Section 2 (Findings)** – sets out key findings relating to the program's implementation, appropriateness and effectiveness, as well as what is being learned about what works when responding to unaccompanied young people; and
- **Section 3 (Future directions)** – outlines recommendations aimed at strengthening the program and its capacity to improve outcomes for young people with interrelated experiences of family violence and homelessness who present to the system without a protective parent.

2 Findings

This section sets out findings relating to the program's implementation, appropriateness and effectiveness, as well as what is being learned about what works when responding to unaccompanied young people.

2.1 Implementation

Program implementation, including opportunities to enhance implementation and delivery of the program model, were addressed in detail in the *Preliminary Evaluation Report*, which found that the program was rapidly implemented and being delivered as intended. The following section therefore focusses specifically on enablers to program implementation and delivery – including if the program is expanded or scaled up in the future.

2.1.1 Key enablers of program implementation and delivery

- A foundational element of the Amplify program's successful implementation and delivery is its focus on embedding young people's voices across every stage of the program design, which was enabled by MCM's existing frameworks for engaging in a safe, empowering way with young people with lived (and living) experience.
- The program team invested significant effort in establishing robust, highly effective referral pathways throughout the pilot period – this included actively building the capacity of wider services to identify young people's family violence risk when they present to youth homelessness services and access points.
- The Amplify program team was consistently identified as one of the program's key strengths, with concerted effort required to ensure that the team is properly supported to manage the levels of risk associated with the program, as well as chronic demand.
- Partnerships with specialist family violence services, as well as removing barriers to timely information sharing, were identified as areas for further development.

2.1.1.1 Centring the voices of young people

First and foremost, the evaluation found that a distinguishing feature of the Amplify program is the centring of young people's voices across program design and delivery.

Young people with lived experience contributed to the initial research underpinning the program; initial and detailed program design work; and the shaping of the evaluation. This engagement was enabled through MCM's existing mechanisms and frameworks for engaging with young people with lived (and living experience), which ensured that young people were supported and fairly remunerated for their expertise. Similarly, young people's expertise is embedded in the program in an ongoing way through the inclusion of a peer support role (see section 2.3.1.5).

The involvement of young people meant that the program design recognised and genuinely responded to young people's unique and intersecting support needs from the outset. In particular, it provided an opportunity for young people to surface systemic barriers that they face when presenting to the system unaccompanied (see section 2.4.1.2), with the service model designed to address these barriers in an active way and to mitigate their impacts on young people.

2.1.1.2 Clear, effective referral pathways

A strong focus of the pilot was the establishment of clear and effective referral pathways, including by actively building the capacity of referring programs to identify and assess young people's family violence risk.

To enable this focus within the relatively limited program resources, incoming referrals over the pilot period were limited to MCM programs, including specific refuges, early intervention programs, Hester Hornbrook Academy and Frontyard, MCM's state-wide youth homelessness access point. In addition, a small number of services with which the Amplify program has an established partnership can connect young people with the program by first referring into Frontyard.

To generate appropriate referrals, Amplify program staff delivered in-person and online presentations across relevant MCM services to build understanding of the program eligibility criteria and referral processes. These sessions were complemented by formal two-day training sessions to build capacity to undertake MARAM-aligned risk assessments for young people, as well as the provision of secondary consultations to referring programs (see section 2.3.2).

The first stage of data collection found a high-level of eligible referrals (80%), suggesting strong understanding of the program eligibility criteria across referring programs. During the second stage of data collection, the program team made it a requirement that referring programs participate in a secondary consultation before referring, resulting in 100 percent of referrals being eligible.

Notably, more than half of program referrals came from the Frontyard access point. This means that, in many cases, unaccompanied young people's experiences of family violence are being successfully identified when they first present to the youth homelessness system (see section 2.3.1.1).

While itself an important outcome (see section 2.3.2.1), the increased capacity and confidence of non-specialist services to identify family violence risk, including where it may not be actively disclosed by a young person, required significant and ongoing effort by the program team. Future program resourcing should therefore consider the ongoing resourcing needs of capacity building activities to ensure that these remain a feature of the program.

2.1.1.3 Recruiting, on-boarding and supporting specialist staff

The capabilities and culture of the program team – which consists of a Senior Family Violence Practitioner, two Family Violence Practitioners¹ and a Peer Support Worker – were identified as a key strength of the Amplify program (see section 2.2.2.3). The evaluation identified significant family violence capability across the program team (both professional and lived experience), alongside a deep commitment to young person-centred practice (see section 2.2.2.2).

¹ Initial funding included one Family Violence Practitioner, with a second funded position commencing in February 2025 to reflect consistent demand for the program.

“Because they're a small team, they work really, really closely ... They're all on the same wavelength. I think they communicate exceptionally well with each other and there's no grey areas within their practice. There's a consistency of how they go about their work ... If you were to expand this team ... you'd need [people who are] as driven and [who have] a very clear focus about working with young people and ... holding them at the centre of the work.” (Program leadership)

Ensuring that the program team's unique dual specialisation, culture and genuine commitment to empowering young people is maintained was identified as a potential challenge if the program is taken to scale. The program leadership team noted that multiple recruitment rounds were required to attract suitably skilled candidates, observing that one factor contributing to this challenge may have been the fact that MCM is not a specialist family violence organisation and that practitioners with relevant expertise may have been less likely to identify and apply for roles within MCM.

Beyond recruitment, the evaluation found that the Amplify program team are managing significant levels of risk and working therapeutically with young people who may have complex trauma histories, including by creating environments for safe conversations around family violence harm, suicidality and self-harm, as well as other challenging topics. The program team acknowledged the benefits of external clinical supervision and formal reflective practice – both of which were incorporated into the program based on the evaluation's preliminary recommendations – but pointed to a continuing need to monitor the appropriateness of these arrangements and adjust as required.

Closer partnerships with wider specialist family violence services, including opportunities for joint professional development and training, were identified as another avenue for ensuring that the program team are well-connected and supported (see section 2.1.1.5).

2.1.1.4 Appropriate program resourcing

The evaluation found that the Amplify program is filling a critically important gap in service system responses for young people experiencing family violence and homelessness, as reflected through consistently high demand for the program (see section 2.2.1). While demand was generally able to be managed through a dynamic approach to caseloads, the program team were required to maintain a waitlist for the duration of the pilot period, including after the addition of a second Family Violence Practitioner in February 2025.

Amplify practitioners expressed concern that, while many services across the family violence system and adjacent systems are required to maintain a waitlist, transient young people face unique barriers to help-seeking and are less likely to remain engaged over time where support is not forthcoming. To address this concern, the team established a process whereby the program's peer support role would actively hold young people following intake to maintain their engagement with the program and monitor dynamic risk.

External practitioners also observed that the capacity of the program team to balance such a high-level of service quality with high demand for the program is partially attributable to Amplify practitioners going ‘above and beyond’ and questioned the sustainability of the program’s current resourcing model. External practitioners also emphasised the value of formal training and secondary consultations delivered through the Amplify program (see section 2.3.2), and did not want to see these elements fall away – particularly for young people who do not meet the eligibility criteria of the Amplify program but who would still benefit from the specialist family violence expertise which Amplify practitioners are able to provide through secondary consultations.

Noting these challenges, the evaluation found that any decision to continue or expand the Amplify program should be accompanied by a rapid review of program resourcing requirements. This would be to ensure that the program continues to deliver on the dual aims of providing risk and readiness-informed case management to unaccompanied young people, while also building the capacity of wider programs to support young people who are not eligible for the Amplify program (including because of their age or level of risk) through secondary consultation and other capacity-building activities.

Staff wellbeing and retention should also be a focus of any resourcing review, including consideration of the benefits associated with having multiple specialist and peer support roles within the program team. This can reduce the burden on existing staff and open up opportunities for peer-to-peer, on-the-job learning.

“Having other peer workers would be pretty nice. Even if it was just, you know, one other peer worker to feel like I have someone to bounce ideas off and share a little bit of the pressure with ... And I think having that solidarity with other lived experienced workers is very helpful for peer workers in general.” (Amplify practitioner)

Finally, the absence of crisis brokerage was identified as a critical gap in the current program resourcing. Over the pilot period, this gap was able to be addressed through MCM’s wider fundraising income, enabling the program team to respond to a range of material needs. These included phone credit, groceries, school supplies, costs of securing identification documents, citizenship costs, suitcases to carry belongings, storage facilities and technology sweeps – as well as just the capacity to buy a young person a coffee or meal when conducting outreach to promote feelings of safety and support. Future program resourcing should therefore incorporate brokerage funds to bridge the gap where young people are waiting for other financial assistance and entitlements, as well as to facilitate outreach and engagement.

2.1.1.5 Partnerships with specialist family violence services

Effective partnerships with specialist family violence services were identified as being central to the capacity of the Amplify program to respond to young people’s family violence risk and needs, as well as ensuring that young people supported through Amplify have access to the same resources and entitlements as other victim survivors. To date, this has primarily been addressed through an evolving partnership with GenWest – a specialist family violence service that provides family violence case management; coordinates one of Victoria’s Risk Assessment and Management Panels (RAMPs); and is the lead agency for The Orange Door in Melbourne’s west.

Timely information sharing was identified as a particular challenge by the program team and leadership, with the latter observing that not having access to the level of risk information which is available through The Orange Door – including risk information from L17s (family violence incident reports) and Child Protection – was having a considerable impact on the program’s capacity to assess and respond to dynamic risk outside of information that the young person was able to provide. This was identified as a particular concern when working with young people experiencing intimate partner violence, as this was a context in which dynamic risk could change and escalate rapidly.

“[W]e’re kind of working a bit more in the dark around risk because we can really just take what people are saying to us and it’s difficult to gather information. So, being able to access the information that [The Orange Door network] have access to would be helpful.” (Program leadership)

In addition to impacting on the program’s capacity to access risk information in a timely way, sitting outside of the specialist family violence system also meant that the Amplify program was limited in its capacity to *share* risk information proactively and to coordinate a multiagency risk response.

As a result, practitioners observed that young people with whom they work may be contacted by The Orange Door or other services and agencies when they are already engaged with the Amplify program. This in turn can contribute to confusion and system overwhelm for the young person, as well as inefficient use of resources by stretched family violence and Child Protection systems.

GenWest practitioners observed that, to function as a genuine alternative to existing family violence system access and support pathways, the Amplify program should have access to the same timely, comprehensive risk information as The Orange Door and other specialist family violence services. As one mainstream family violence practitioner observed:

“I think what happens sometimes in the service sector is ... it doesn’t recognise the absence of those other resources that we have access to and that that victim survivors should be entitled to and eligible for. So, I think that was ... kind of the real key thing that, that we felt quite strongly that that those young people [engaged with Amplify] are entitled to be able to access that. And they should be able to both access a specialist service that’s able to meet their needs directly, being a service for young people, and also access the resources that other victim survivors are able to access.” (External practitioner)

More broadly, the partnership with GenWest enabled Amplify clients to access flexible support packages and afforded opportunities for the Amplify program team to seek secondary consultations from other specialist family violence practitioners – including to assist in identifying potential supports and entitlements for which young people were eligible. The potential for joint training and professional development was also identified by Amplify program staff and by GenWest practitioners as a key benefit of the partnership.

2.1.1.6 Suitable accommodation and housing pathways

Finally, the extent to which the Amplify program could facilitate a young person's access to safe, appropriate housing – while not in scope for the program or the evaluation – emerged as both an enabler and barrier to the program's capacity to address family violence risk in a meaningful way. This is discussed further at section 2.3.1.7.

2.2 Appropriateness

2.2.1 Who is accessing the Amplify program

- The Amplify program is experiencing consistent demand, with the program responding almost exclusively to young people experiencing the highest level of family violence risk, as well as intersecting risks associated with homelessness.
- Approximately three quarters of young people referred to and supported by the program are aged 17 to 19 and almost three quarters identify as female. Notably, almost one fifth identify as non-binary or self-described and approximately one third identify as LGBTQIA+.
- Almost three quarters of young people were experiencing family of origin violence, with over one fifth experiencing intimate partner violence and three young people experiencing both during their period of program engagement.
- Presenting young people were living in a range of unsafe situations, with approximately one third experiencing street-based homelessness or significant transience. Almost one quarter of young people were residing with the person using violence at the point of referral, including in refuge or supported housing settings.

The Amplify program has consistently met and exceeded its service targets over the pilot period, evidencing both effective referral pathways and significant demand for the program. Eligibility criteria for the program are set out at Figure 2.

Figure 2: Amplify program eligibility criteria

Eligibility criteria

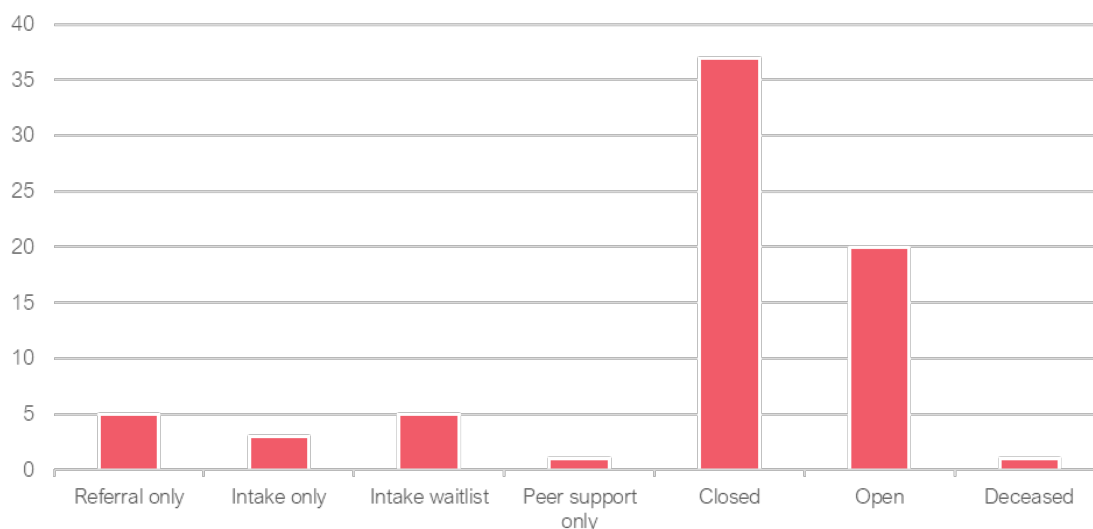
- Young person is aged 15 to 19 years of age; AND
- Young person has been identified as experiencing violence within their family of origin, family of choice and/or intimate partner violence; AND
- Based on a MARAM-aligned risk assessment, family violence risk has been assessed as 'serious' (see below); AND
- Young person is not able to access appropriate support through existing specialist family violence services and programs.

For the purposes of the Amplify program, the assessment of 'serious risk' includes identified MARAM indicators of risk; structured professional judgment; the young person's self-assessment of their own safety; the absence or lack of protective factors; and intersections of family violence risk with the young person's mental health, AOD use, identity or other co-complexities that can be understood as increasing risk.

Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program documentation.

Since it commenced accepting referrals in late February 2024, the program has received **72** eligible referrals. Of these, **59** young people have been actively supported – **37** of whom received case management and have subsequently closed and 20 of whom remain open and currently engaged.² It is also important to acknowledge that, consistent with the co-occurrence and interrelated nature of trauma and significant mental ill-health for the program’s client cohort, one young person died during their program engagement. A breakdown of referral outcomes is provided at Figure 3.

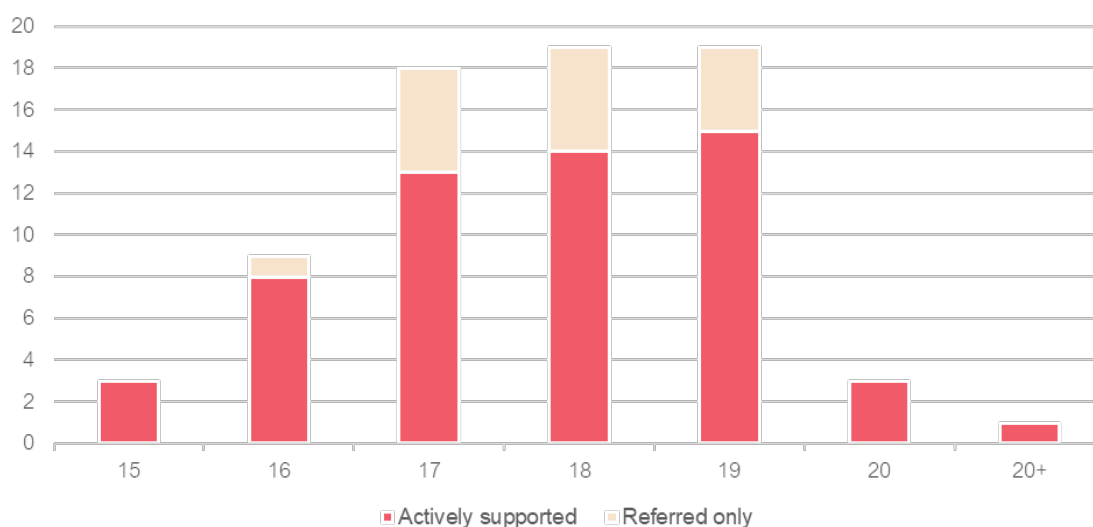
Figure 3: Breakdown of eligible referrals by outcome



Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

The vast majority of young people referred to and supported by the program are aged 17 to 19 (78% and 75% respectively). Less than one fifth of young people referred and supported were 16 and under, including just three 15-year-olds over the pilot period. Four young people referred and supported were aged 20 and over but were assessed as eligible for support – either because they ‘aged out’ of the program shortly after being referred or because of developmental considerations which meant that their needs could not be met through other services (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Breakdown of referrals and clients by age



Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

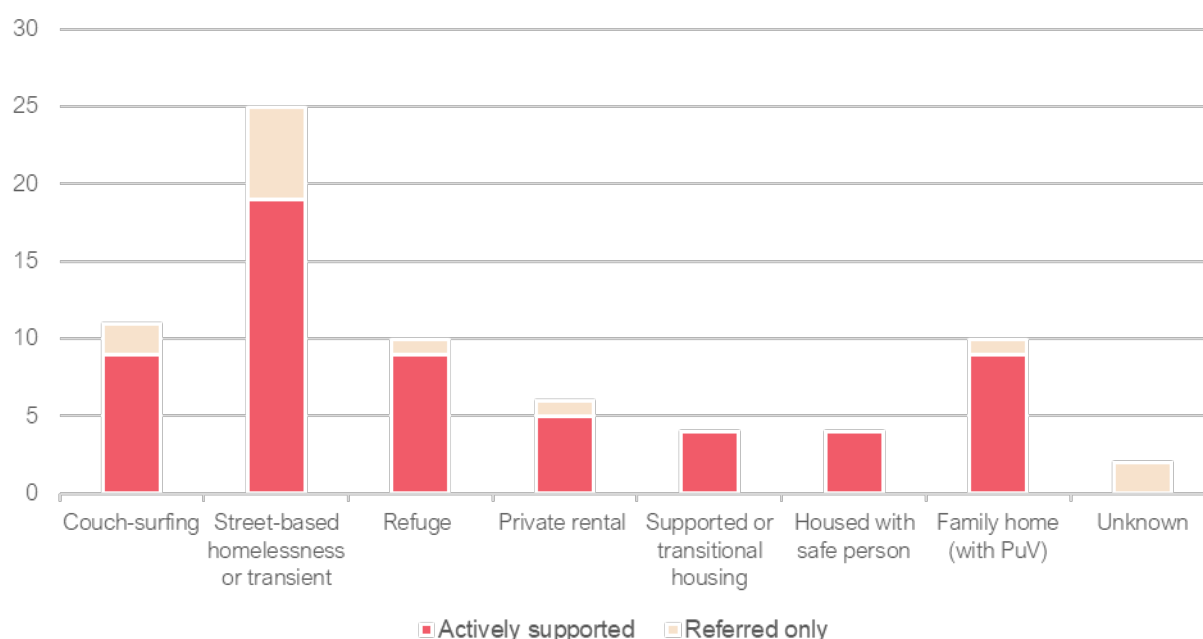
² An additional young person received peer support only and has subsequently closed.

Almost three quarters of young people referred and supported identify as female (73%), with less than one fifth identifying as male (19%). In addition, almost one tenth of young people identify as non-binary or self-describe their gender identity. Approximately one third of young people (31%) referred to and supported by the program identify as LGBTQIA+, reflecting the over-representation of LGBTQIA+ young people both as victim survivors of family violence and as people experiencing homelessness. In addition, almost one tenth of young people did not disclose their sexuality, consistent with the age and stage of identity formation for the program's target cohort.

More than one tenth of young people referred and supported identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. In addition, approximately one tenth of young people supported through the program were born in a country other than Australia.

Presenting young people were living in a range of unsafe situations, with approximately one third experiencing street-based homelessness or significant transience. Other young people who received support through the program were residing in the family home (15%); couch-surfing (15%); accommodated in refuge (15%); living in a private rental (8%); housed with a safe family member or friend (7%); or residing in supported or transitional housing (7%) (see Figure 5). Overall, almost one quarter of young people were known to be residing with the person using violence when they presented, including in the family home, private rental, refuge and supported housing.

Figure 5: Breakdown of referrals and clients by living situation



Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

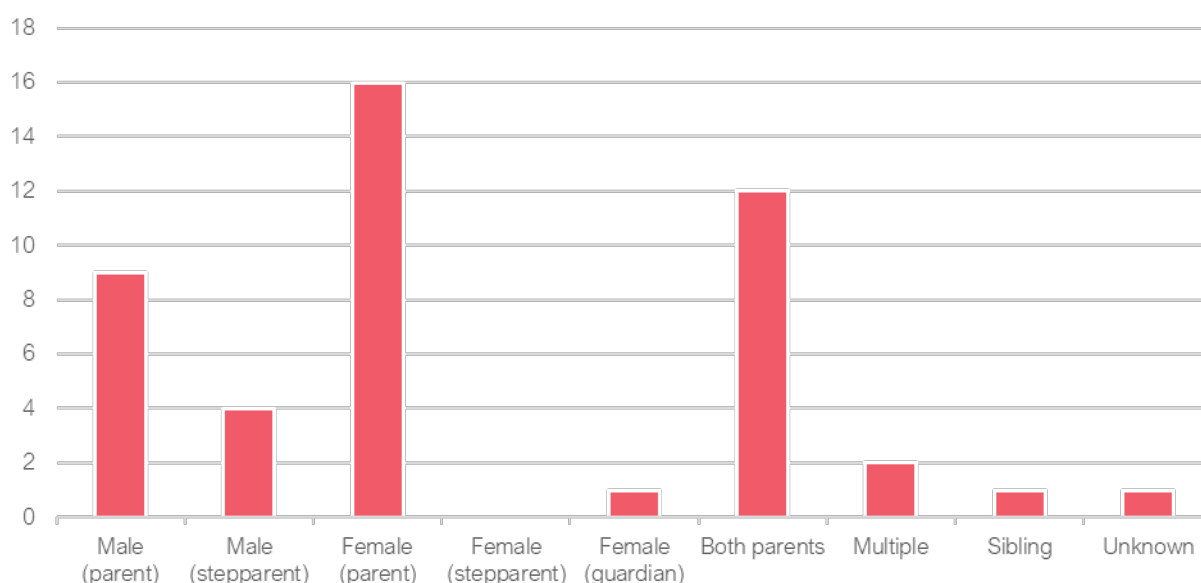
Almost all young people were assessed as experiencing serious family violence risk according to the MARAM,³ with a small number assessed as being at 'elevated risk' but requiring immediate and specialist intervention. This was a result of intersecting forms of risk (such as risks associated with homelessness and mental ill-health) or where the risk would have been assessed as serious in the recent past and there was a high likelihood of the risk escalating again in the absence of support.

³ 'Serious risk' is the highest level of risk identified by the MARAM, indicating a significant threat of serious harm or violence requiring immediate and comprehensive intervention.

The majority of young people supported through the program were experiencing family of origin violence (73%), with over one fifth of young people (22%) experiencing intimate partner violence and three young people (5%) experiencing both.⁴

Of those young people experiencing family of origin violence, almost one-third were experiencing violence from both parents or from multiple family members (30%). One fifth of young people were experiencing violence from their biological father only, while more than one third were experiencing violence from their biological mother (35%) (see Figure 6). In all, violence from a male parent (or parental figure) was identified in more than half of cases (54%), with violence from a female parent (or parental figure) identified in almost two-thirds of cases (63%). More than half of young people had historical Child Protection involvement noted in their file.

Figure 6: Breakdown of clients experiencing family of origin violence by person using violence



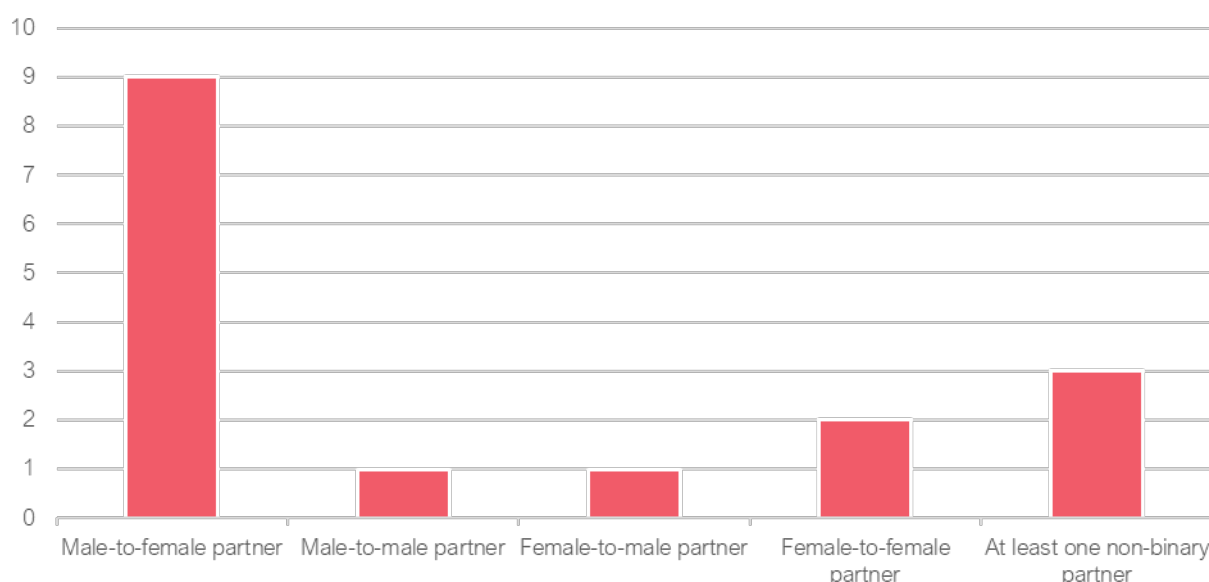
Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

Acknowledging that the prevalence of violence being perpetrated by a mother within the Amplify program cohort diverges from the wider evidence base, program practitioners observed that, where young people experience violence from a male parent or stepparent, the young person's mother will often act protectively. The requirement that young people be without a protective parent to access the program therefore meant that the Amplify program experienced an over-representation of violence perpetrated by mothers, relative to the overall rates of violence perpetrated by a parent towards a child.

⁴ Data on the nature of young people's family violence risk, including relationship to the person using violence, is only provided to those young people who actively engaged with the program over time (i.e., not young people who did not engage or disengaged following intake). This is because evidence, including learnings from this evaluation, suggest that risk assessments with young people need to be iterative and based on a foundation of trust and rapport. As such, information provided through initial referrals may not be a comprehensive or accurate reflection of the multiple relationships across which a young person may be experiencing violence.

While violence in intimate partner relationships more closely mapped against heteronormative family violence narratives (more than half involved a male using violence towards a female intimate partner), Amplify clients often experienced violence in intimate relationships that sit outside this dominant paradigm. This included three young people experiencing violence in same-sex couples; two non-binary or self-describing young people experiencing violence from a male partner; one non-binary or self-describing young person experiencing violence from a female partner; and one young male experiencing violence from a female partner (see Figure 7).⁵

Figure 7: Breakdown of clients experiencing intimate partner violence by gender identity



Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

Approximately one third of young people supported through the program had disengaged from both education and employment (34%). Remarkably, more than one third of those accessing the program (39%), despite their significant experiences of family violence and homelessness, remained engaged with education, employment or both when they first presented to the program – making maintaining this engagement a focus of case management support. Consistent with the program’s target age range, this included one quarter of young people who had remained engaged in secondary school. In addition, almost one fifth of young people were employed (19%) and nine young people (15%) were actively job-seeking when they first presented.

Overall, service data paints a complex picture of the Amplify program cohort, who present with intersecting needs and identities, with violence being experienced across a range of relationships and shelter being sought through varying – but often unsafe – means. Consistent, however, is the level of risk young people face because of their experiences of family violence. The capacity of the program to respond to this complexity and level of risk is outlined in section 2.2.2.

⁵ Please note, for young people experiencing both family of origin and intimate partner violence, data does not specify the family member(s) using violence.

2.2.2 Capacity of the program to respond to young people's needs

- The evaluation found that the program successfully combined family violence specialisation with developmentally informed practice, which was highly appropriate for and responsive to the needs of its target cohort.
- The program's integrated approach to assessing and responding to risk – incorporating family violence risk and those associated with mental health, substance use or homelessness – enabled safety and harm reduction measures to be implemented across multiple domains of a young person's life.
- A key strength of the program is its capacity to 'grow' alongside a young person, through non-judgmental practice and readiness-informed engagement and case management that engages with a young person at their own pace and on their level and builds safety over time.
- The co-location of the program within a youth homelessness service allowed for young people to be supported where they are most likely to present and created opportunities for intake and early engagement to occur in person. This in turn was identified as an important factor in establishing rapport and promoting ongoing engagement.

2.2.2.1 Family violence risk and trauma-informed

The evaluation found that the program team share a nuanced understanding of young people's unique experiences of family violence risk and harm, as well as the ongoing impacts of family violence trauma for young victim survivors. This specialisation included capacity to provide critical and developmentally tailored supports such as MARAM risk assessment, safety planning and psychoeducation to help young people to make sense of their experiences. It also enabled the program team to share important risk information with wider services, including Child Protection, to promote risk-informed decision making.

Practitioners and young people observed that, while young people are often wary of disclosing experiences of family violence to service system workers, Amplify practitioners were frequently able to create safe and trusting relationships in which young people were then able to disclose and reflect on their experiences of family violence, as well as changes in dynamic risk. This in turn meant that the Amplify program team could advocate for young people and share information with other services, reducing the need for young people to re-tell their story (see section 2.3.1.2).

"We sat down, and we did my long-ass MARAM and that took a whole stress off my shoulders. I didn't have to repeat my sob story to everyone I had to talk to, you know?" (Amplify client)

Practitioner focus groups and case studies also indicated that the program team was uniquely attuned to the specific forms of family violence risk which young people experience and which can be poorly understood across mainstream family violence service settings.

“The forms of family and intimate partner violence faced by the younger cohort are very specific, and I think Amplify workers have demonstrated that they're very aware of the kind of new and emerging challenges that younger people are facing that I wouldn't have known about otherwise ... There's just been so much invaluable knowledge, I think, specifically around that age group and how family violence and intimate partner violence present.” (External practitioner)

In particular, the evaluation identified strong capacity to assess and respond to young people's experiences of family violence within their family of origin, as well as experiences of poly-victimisation, which are often invisible within the mainstream service system (see section 2.4.2.2). This is illustrated in the following case study, involving the perpetration of violence across multiple relationships (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Case study (Christina)

Case study (Christina)

Christina (19-years-old female) experienced physical violence in her family of origin from both her mother and older sister. As a result, she left home at age 15 and has since cycled between refuges and living with romantic partners. In her most recent relationship, Christina experienced significant levels of sexual, physical and financial violence, which escalated when she became pregnant and ultimately led to her suffering a miscarriage.

Christina left this relationship six months prior to engaging with MCM for significant housing instability and risk of homelessness. At this time, she was living on her own, but her ex-partner would repeatedly show up looking for somewhere to stay. The ex-partner would often use substances at the house and become aggressive, causing damage to the property. This resulted in Christina being evicted from the house and facing ongoing VCAT proceedings to pay for the damage. Christina had previously reached out to The Orange Door and Safe Steps but found the process overwhelming and had not received adequate support so did not re-engage.

Once Christina's layered family violence risk was identified by MCM, she was referred to Amplify. The Amplify practitioner recognised the importance of securing safe housing for Christina before she could work towards any further healing goals, but was unable to place her in the youth refuge given the significant risk still posed by her ex-partner. The practitioner advocated for emergency accommodation funding for Christina, first approaching a specialist family violence service who refused because of an incorrect assumption that she could return to her family of origin, before eventually securing funding from another specialist family violence service. During this time, the practitioner also engaged Christina in safety planning processes, including a technology sweep, and connected her with legal support for VCAT.

Amplify continued to advocate on the young person's behalf to the specialist family violence system, including by providing a youth-specific lens to Christina's family violence risk. Through this education and uplift, Christina was placed in a family violence refuge and received associated case management and access to therapeutic interventions as a result. The outcome of this was that Christina was able to access secure accommodation in which she felt safe, allowing her to identify and work toward longer-term goals, including her mental health and housing needs.

Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

Amplify practitioners emphasised the importance of slowing down the risk assessment process, engaging iteratively across their engagement with the young person to ensure a comprehensive and dynamic understanding of risk, including where it is present across multiple relationships. Conversations about risk were, crucially, accompanied by developmentally appropriate psychoeducational conversations about harm. Consistent with this, service data indicated that all clients engaged in the program, either through case management or peer support, had received psychoeducational support in some form (see section 2.3.1.4).

"We're able to take more time to ask a lot of questions and record a lot of information, which is also good because a lot of MARAMs that we're doing have multiple [perpetrators]. So, we'll do parents, and then we'll do partner if that's the situation, or both parents ... I think, also, the fact that we're engaged with them for so long [so] we do a lot of updating of risk." (Amplify practitioner)

Practitioners and young people also reflected on the Amplify program's distinct capacity to undertake 'integrated' risk assessment and safety planning which could account for both family violence risk, as well as risks associated with experiences of homelessness, mental ill-health, and alcohol and drug use.

Because of the high levels of family violence competence within the program team, Amplify practitioners described being confident to tailor MARAM risk assessment processes to account for these different forms of risk, as well as to provide opportunities for young people to make disclosures around stigmatised topics, including self-harm and suicide (see section 2.3.1.6). Reflecting on the need for this integrated approach, Amplify practitioners observed:

"[T]he siloing is then the problem because, actually, [the young person is] having a holistic experience. They're not having an experience of mental health over here, family violence over here, drug use over here. They're having an experience where they're experiencing everything at the same time." (Amplify practitioner)

The program team's youth-specific approach to risk assessment and safety planning was further enabled by the development of a youth-friendly safety planning template. One external practitioner working in a mainstream service identified the value of using Amplify's more developmentally responsive template, compared to a traditional safety plan.

"We were discussing how the safety plan that we'd normally do is so clinical, and quite a boring document. I reached out to someone from Amplify and they sent me through a copy of their safety plan template they use, and it's bit more colour, bit more user-friendly language. It's something that you can fill out with the young person and provide to them. And I think that little difference is really needed when trying to have these conversations with young people around family violence."
(External practitioner)

The specialist family violence expertise of the program team was also evident in their understanding of the financial and material entitlements available to young victim survivors, and willingness to advocate for Amplify clients to access a diverse range of material and therapeutic supports (see section 2.3.1.3). This expertise was further bolstered through the establishment of the program's partnership with GenWest, which included co-case management, secondary consultation, as well as leveraging access to key entitlements, including flexible support packages and family violence refuge placements.

Drawing on conversations with Amplify clients, the CIJ also observed a strong capability among the program team to embed trauma-responsive practice in every part of the case management process, from risk assessment through to transitioning young people out of the program. One young person reflected on their Amplify practitioner's care in keeping track of past disclosures where the young person's experiences of trauma and mental ill-health had impacted their ability to remember and recount their experiences.

"It's just hard for me to talk about. And I, I leave a lot out, sometimes. I think, because also I've told them different stuff over time. And I don't remember a lot. So, I guess like they have [remembered] things that I didn't ... so [my Amplify practitioners] like understood more, like knew more, than what I was telling them."
(Amplify client)

The evaluation also found that a core strength of the program is the way in which it embeds opportunities for therapeutic engagement and steps towards healing in a non-clinical setting, consistent with MCM's wider healing-oriented framework for engaging with young people. This capacity was identified across both interviews and case studies and is demonstrated in the practice example outlined at Figure 9.

Figure 9: Practice example (Roya)

Practice example

Roya is a 16-year-old young person who is experiencing violence in her family of origin. Because of stringent Parenting Orders brought about by Roya's abusive parent, Roya must attend multiple weekly appointments with lawyers, psychologists and other specialists. Understanding that attending these appointments causes stress for Roya, Roya's Amplify practitioner offers to drive her to these appointments and uses their time in the car together as an opportunity to build rapport and trust with Roya in a non-clinical setting. Over time, Roya begins to use her driving time with her Amplify practitioner as a safe place to make disclosures; have broader conversations about her experiences; and speak about her goals for the future.

Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

External practitioners similarly reflected that the Amplify program team were able to embed healing-oriented conversations about family violence into their regular engagement with young people, creating safe opportunities for young people to reflect on their experiences in a less formalised environment. This was found to be particularly significant given that many young people entering the program were not yet in a place where they were ready to engage with external therapeutic supports, particularly mental health support. Young people, in turn, described how ongoing conversations with their Amplify practitioner could help them to feel less alone in their experiences and genuinely supported by the service system.

"[My Amplify practitioner] was very, very supportive, you know, she wasn't like just interested in getting it over with. She was interested in making sure I felt, you know, cared about and respected in our conversations." (Program participant)

The benefits of the Amplify program's family violence specialisation, including the program's capacity to maintain a lens on the impacts of trauma, is considered further at section 2.3.1.4.

2.2.2.2 Developmentally appropriate ways of working

The evaluation found that the Amplify program's flexible, client-centred and readiness-informed model enabled program staff to work with young people in a developmentally appropriate way that clearly distinguished the program from mainstream family violence responses.

Both external practitioners and young people themselves reflected strongly on the ability of Amplify practitioners to work with young people in a way that centred their individual needs, focusing on responding to each young person in the way that worked for them, including through providing outreach support, as well as through the program's ability to sequence interventions at a pace that was responsive to the young person's readiness. As one Amplify client reflected:

"We kept changing; they kept changing with us." (Amplify client)

The ability of the program team to sequence interventions at a pace that matched the readiness of the young person, particularly during intake and the initial service period, was found to be an important feature of the program's client-centred way of working.

"I don't think we really delved into paperwork until like maybe a month in, because it was very much just the slowness of, 'We're here. This is why we're here. We understand what you've been through. We know how much it does damage someone, even if you're not in the relationship.' And it was very much building that trust, which is fundamental to young people." (Amplify client)

External practitioners reflected that this responsive, readiness-informed approach reduced overwhelm for young people and enabled the program team to build robust, trusting relationships with young people before moving into comprehensive risk assessment and safety planning.

"The worker did an incredible job of just really working with the young person with where they were at ... It was more about rapport building and relationship building and trying to show this young person that this was going to be a safe space and that we're going to work with you [at your own pace]." (External practitioner)

Young people engaged in the program similarly described the frequency with which they felt 'overwhelmed' in other service interactions. This contrasted with the distinctiveness of Amplify's approach in being guided by the young person's readiness, while gently guiding them towards important safety interventions and ensuring that they were aware of their entitlements.

"[I said] 'I need support for mental health when I'm in a stable house.' And so, we did that as soon as I got into stable housing. [My Amplify worker] was able to do it at the time I needed it instead of overwhelming me with it whilst I wasn't in stable housing." (Amplify client)

"There were points where I wouldn't necessarily talk. And at those points, [my Amplify worker] would reach out, see how I was doing. You know, if we needed to get something done, [they would] have that gentle reminder, like, 'Hey, remember when you said that you wanted to do this? And when should we get it done?'"
(Amplify client)

The willingness of the Amplify program team to travel to meet clients – despite the program's broad geographical reach – was found to play a significant role in reducing barriers to engagement for clients, particularly those who had previous negative service experiences. The evaluation found that this approach enabled practitioners to build trust in environments that felt safe and comfortable for young people engaging with the program.

"The aspect of outreach, I think, is huge ... from a safety perspective, but also just from an accessibility perspective ... to meet a young person where they're at, so they don't have to rock up to a specific site to do an assessment or anything. They can meet somewhere that feels safe for them and is somewhere that's, you know, like a nice park or something so that you can look after them afterwards and you know, go for a walk and debrief." (External practitioner)

The value of outreach in promoting engagement for young people, but particularly those who are transient or have had to move to a new geographical area to access shelter or improve safety, is illustrated in the following practice example (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: Practice example (James)

Practice example

James, a neurodiverse young person with co-occurring mental health needs, was repeatedly missing appointments with his Amplify practitioner. Upon exploring the barriers to his engagement in a non-judgemental way, James shared that he found the travel from his home in the outer suburbs, to which he had recently moved to escape family violence, difficult. In response, the practitioner organised for outreach to occur closer to James's home, reducing friction in a way that meant that he was able to attend more appointments, in turn contributing to his overall safety.

Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

Young people, particularly those who were neurodiverse, also spoke about the importance of outreach support for accessibility reasons – particularly where the Frontyard environment was not developmentally appropriate or felt sensorily overwhelming.

Reflecting on the value of outreach support, one external practitioner also highlighted the flexible, non-punitive response of Amplify practitioners in continuing to support clients who did not show up to outreach appointments or who otherwise disengaged.

"I've really liked how tailored it is to accessing young people ... The flexibility of being able to change time, location, whatever they need to, make sure that it's a safe location that they're meeting ... Or, if they've attended and the young person hasn't been able or willing to meet up with them that day, to have the flexibility to be like, okay, we will just reschedule. And it doesn't dictate their access to the program." (External practitioner)

The evaluation found that the outreach support provided by the Amplify program team was inextricable from the broader practical support delivered through the program. Both features were key strengths of the program model that were deeply responsive to the needs of unaccompanied young people.

This support extended far beyond what was typically available through other services working with young people, including youth homelessness case managers, and includes things like driving young people to appointments; organising and dropping off food and laundry hampers; and generally helping young people with administrative and logistical stresses in a responsive and flexible way.

Importantly, this practice support appeared to have therapeutic benefits for young people engaged in the program by demonstrating genuine care and contrasting with service interactions in which young people had previously felt neglected. All five of the young people who participated in interviews made specific mention of an Amplify practitioner taking the time to drive them somewhere, or to drive something to their house, and reflected on the significance of these gestures in making them feel valued and supported.

"I never felt, like, upset or scared or intimidated at all, like, throughout the whole time. [My Amplify worker] was probably one of the sweetest workers I've worked with, like, throughout the whole time being homeless [they] went, like, out of [their] way to, like, think of things that I might need that I didn't even know I needed." (Amplify client)

External practitioners described the transformative impact of practical support in scaffolding young people's access to other services and entitlements, which set the Amplify program apart from many other services.

"Birth certificates, for ID, Centrelink payments, a whole host of ... standard elements that we find young people don't have. So, IDs, their own bank accounts, things like that are huge, but [the onus] predominantly sits with young people who are experiencing family violence." (External practitioners)

Aside from the administrative support provided to access critical documents, open bank accounts and receive Centrelink payments, the program team also placed a heavy emphasis on providing practical support to enable young people to move into safer living situations. Young people who participated in interviews repeatedly emphasised the emotional magnitude of this support in enabling them to create home environments of their own, sometimes for the first time.

"When I first moved in all my clothes were just in boxes. And [my Amplify worker] got me a, like, set of drawers, and I was able to put them all away, and I helped, like, my mental health actually, just, like, seeing a clean room and not being messy." (Amplify client)

Multiple young people, as well as practitioners, also spoke highly of the program's developmental responsiveness in keeping client files open, even when the young person did not have capacity to engage. This reflected the fact that young people are often likely to disengage for periods of time because of factors such as increased family violence risk or lack of access to technology and transport, or as a trauma response.

"They didn't just drop me. Like, they didn't like closed my file or anything. So, it made me kind of, like oh, maybe, like, I should engage. Like, because they actually like stuck around maybe they were actually going to help." (Amplify client)

For this specific young person, the Amplify program team reaching out consistently via text empowered them to contact the program team at a point where they felt ready to engage, while also reassuring them that there were adults who were invested in their safety and wellbeing.

"Just getting checked up on. Even if when I wasn't talking. I felt bad during the time, and I was very like worried about services and things, because I'd gotten kicked out of the [last] place [because I wasn't] engaging. So, again, like talking to me still and reminding me like I wasn't kind of just going to get dumped again. I think them doing that is the only reason I'm still getting help with them now. Because if they didn't like talk to me or anything, I probably would've just like completely left it." (Amplify client)

Amplify practitioners likewise reflected on the importance of the program's flexible timeframes and capacity to keep young people open, even during periods of disengagement. They described how this capacity kept young people 'anchored to the service system' and improved safety outcomes over time.

"I've got a couple of young people I've been working with for almost a year. And two of them have been fairly consistent throughout that, but the other two disappeared for long periods of time. And I think that ... Amplify become this sort of anchor that connected them to services that they knew [because] all of the other services closed because they hadn't been able to make contact. And it was just ... all my texts, completely unanswered for ages, but they knew when something did come up, they called. And then engagement with services for both of those young people increased this year, they're both now in safe housing."
(Amplify practitioner)

Importantly, the evaluation found that the dynamic practice of the Amplify program team was underpinned by a foundation of careful attention both to the acuity and complexity of family violence risk experienced by the client cohort, as well as to the developmental stage of individual Amplify clients. External practitioners remarked on the capacity of Amplify practitioners to navigate complex family violence risk in a youth appropriate way.

"I also really appreciate that Amplify was very careful about advising young people [using] acts of resistance – to not just tell them to walk away, [instead] being able to tailor a response [such as asking] for a bit of space for a few days, or very specific practical, realistic steps that a young person can do to keep themselves safer ..." (External practitioner)

Along similar lines, external practitioners also reflected on the ability of the program team to support young people's safety in contexts where their age and circumstances made it impossible or impracticable to immediately leave the situation of violence.

"I'm currently supporting someone who is quite young ... and still at home with his family. And as much as we'd love to see him not be there anymore because of what he's experiencing, we unfortunately have just had to support him where he's at for the moment ... Amplify have really been invaluable in the way that they've supported this young person because they're there able to support him even though he's actively experiencing violence, which a lot of supports or services out there won't do." (External practitioner)

The program's capacity to engage children in safety planning and risk management strategies in ways that are matched to their developmental age and stage is illustrated below (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Case study (Ade)

Case study (Ade)

Ade (14-years-old) presented to Frontyard in an attempt to leave the family home given escalating family violence risk after she came out as transgender to her family. Frontyard were unable to provide a housing response because of Ade's age but made a referral to Amplify for a risk assessment and safety planning. A mandatory notification to Child Protection was also made, although the case was closed without further action.

Because of Ade's age, and with Child Protection closing her case, Amplify was the only service that was able to step in and provide coordinated support and case management. With Ade still living in the family home with the people who had used violence towards her, her Amplify practitioner adapted their practice to account for and mitigate the ongoing family violence risk. This included meeting Ade during school hours and using brokerage to provide a safe phone.

In addition to providing dynamic safety planning, Ade's practitioner mapped available formal and informal supports and helped her to better understand her rights, responsibilities and entitlements so that she could better navigate the service system. Ade shared with her practitioner that, above all else, it was important to her that she had someone who listened to and took seriously her disclosures of harm, particularly given other parts of the system had failed to do this.

Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

In addition to having the capacity to work with young people who remained in the home with the person (or people) using violence, the program's readiness-informed approach also meant that it supported young people to leave when they were ready to do so. This included working with young people over time to build their confidence and capability to leave a situation of violence.

"It was so much easier than I thought to like actually just leave [...] It took a while, but it was worth it. And I'm glad that like, Amplify was able to help me with that because they made it a lot more comfortable and a lot less scary to do it."

(Amplify client)

External practitioners reflected on the importance of this readiness-informed approach, as well as the capacity of the program to create opportunities for young people to identify their own safety needs and goals over time.

"The practitioners that I've worked with have been ... really good at rapport building and very empathetic, very kind and creating space for the young people, very careful not to push them beyond their boundaries and their limits. I think gently challenging, but yeah, always respecting the young person and actually giving them back some power in dealing with this situation." (External practitioner)

The willingness of the Amplify program to work responsively to achieve the best outcomes for young people, rather than adopting a rigid approach to their service scope and responsibilities, was identified as a key strength of the program model – and directly contributed to the outcomes outlined at section 2.3.1.6.

2.2.2.3 Inclusive, safe and de-stigmatising

Throughout both conversations with young people, and focus groups with practitioners, the CIJ observed an inclusive, non-judgmental and de-stigmatising culture in which Amplify practitioners were able to not only support young people's safety, but also gently encourage young people to develop self-esteem and independence. Importantly, the Amplify program team's commitment to inclusive practice was bolstered by meaningful action and advocacy on behalf of young people, supporting Amplify clients to feel a sense of safety and confidence in the care they received. As a result, the evaluation found that the Amplify program team were able to work with young victim survivors in a way that viewed them as a whole person, beyond just their experiences of harm.

"I guess the key fundamentals that make Amplify work is being seen with no judgment, not being seen as a victim." (Amplify client)

At the same time, the evaluation found that the program team was highly attuned to the impacts of trauma on young people's development, as well as the different ways in which these impacts could manifest. This included, for example, working in a non-judgmental way with young people with stigmatised coping mechanisms and self-soothing behaviours, such as drug use, self-harm, and continued relationships with people using violence – particularly as this is a cohort who often experience service exclusion as a result of these behaviours (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Practice example (Hamish)

Practice example

Hamish engaged with Amplify as a result of prolonged experiences of violence in his family of origin. Because of a lack of services for heterosexual male victim survivors, this was the first time that he had been able to access family violence support.

Hamish's Amplify practitioner took the time to build rapport and trust with him, including by listening to and validating his experiences of harm and not passing judgement on the self-soothing activities in which he engaged.

As a result of the safety created in this therapeutic relationship, Hamish felt comfortable in disclosing to his practitioner the ways in which his substance use and mental health challenges were impacting his own relationship with his partner. The Amplify practitioner was then able to facilitate conversations about boundaries, needs and expectations in a non-judgemental way, empowering Hamish to engage in harm-reduction and mental health supports that may have otherwise gone unaddressed.

Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

Similarly, the program team reflected on the importance of being able to work with young people who want to maintain contact with the person using violence in a non-judgmental way.

"[For] so many of the young people that we work with, social isolation has been part of the violence, so they don't have a lot of community. The person using violence is quite often the most important person in a young person's life ... it feels at times like victim blaming, like the system itself is victim blaming." (Amplify practitioner)

This understanding and non-judgmental approach extended to working with young people experiencing poly-victimisation, who had often experienced a lifetime of abuse and had little to no safe relationships in their lives.

"If they have been in family of origin violence and have entered a relationship with intimate partner violence, that can be the only person that they've been able to talk about their experience to ... if I was a 16 year old girl, I would find it hard to leave my boyfriend as well, if I didn't have any other friends or family." (Amplify practitioner)

In one particularly acute example, an external practitioner coordinating a Risk Assessment and Management Panel (RAMP), described the ability of the Amplify program team in engaging a young person who was at serious risk of lethality and who had historically disengaged from mainstream family violence services. In this instance, the practitioner also described the value of Amplify being co-located within Frontyard in reducing the barriers to service engagement.

"I honestly think that if it hadn't been Amplify, I don't think this young person would have engaged with the service at all. I think that there had been attempts by Orange Door to engage with this person, and that didn't go well. And I believe there'd also been attempts with Safe Steps to engage this young person, and that also didn't eventuate." (RAMP coordinator)

Throughout all evaluation activities, it was evident that practitioners have a deep respect for the young people with whom they work, frequently remarking on their resilience, persistence and strengths. This translated, in practice, to young people feeling respected and genuinely cared for by Amplify practitioners and beginning the process of rebuilding and repairing trust in the service system (see section 2.3.1.7).

The commitment of the Amplify program team to being transparent with young people; respecting their agency; and retaining a non-punitive approach to case management were all found to be a crucial tenet of the mutually trusting relationships that practitioners were able to build with clients.

"I think we're really open and transparent with young people in ways that other services might not be. We ... understand that they have decision making [power] in their own lives and we respect those decisions, even for example if we don't agree with them. If their decision is to go back to a violent partner, or to a violent parent, we talk about how we can support them to be safer in that experience. And we won't punish them for that." (Amplify practitioner)

The evaluation found that this transparency extended to the program team's ability to work with young people who were fearful of the service system given their awareness of mandatory reporting obligations and past negative experiences of statutory involvement. This approach included not only being open with young people about what the mandatory reporting process involved but actively supporting young people to advocate for themselves through that process about what they wanted to have happen.

"We'll be really clear with young people, and we'll say things like, 'I'm going to ask you a couple of questions about your younger siblings. I just have to let you know that if there is any chance that they might be experiencing violence, I will have to make a report to Child Protection.'" (Amplify practitioner)

This commitment to transparency and empowering young people also facilitated optimally safe engagement for younger cohorts engaging with the program – including where they had previously had their experiences minimised or ignored by the service system because of their age.

"They were, like, the first people that actually listened to us and didn't say, you're 15, you don't know anything. Like, they were the first people that sat there and listened to what we had to say." (Amplify client)

The evaluation also found that the Peer Support Worker role, as another key feature of the Amplify program model, also helped young people to feel safe, seen and supported – including in settings where they might otherwise feel uncomfortable, unsafe or stigmatised.

Practitioners described the benefits of having a Peer Support Worker sit with a young person in service settings and environments where they did not feel comfortable, or of having conversations beforehand with their Peer Support Worker about why they might not feel safe in particular contexts. Practitioners also described the value of the Peer Support Worker role in providing support to young people who presented as heightened or distressed. In these situations, the Peer Support Worker able to provide informal support and encouragement; communicate with the young person on their level; and provide a touchpoint for young people when they were not feeling like they could interact with other practitioners.

"I know [at the Frontyard access point] in particular, if we've got somebody who may be heightened ... or finding it difficult to maybe talk about that kind of stuff, having [the Peer Support Worker] around ... to maybe have a one-on-one chat with them as kind of a less formal worker could certainly help navigate that. [The Peer Support Workers has] a really good ability to help regulate and maybe communicate on a different level than an older 'grey' person such as myself trying to talk to them." (External practitioner)

The benefits of peer support for Amplify clients are discussed in further detail at section 2.3.1.5.

The inclusive, de-stigmatising approach of the Amplify program team was also found to strengthen the program's capacity to provide safe, responsive support to LGBTIQ+ young people engaged in the program. Here, the program team's ability to identify and validate experiences of identity-based abuse within a young person's family of origin was found to be a critical part of the program's ability to provide safe case management for LGBTIQ+ clients (see Figure 13).

Figure 13: Practice example (Lee)

Practice example

Lee initially engaged with Amplify because of experiences of identity-based abuse in their family of origin regarding their gender identity. After continued rapport-building and psychoeducational support from their Amplify practitioner, Lee stated that getting their name changed by law was an important goal for them in the context of their healing and support needs.

Because Lee had previously disclosed significant experiences of service system distrust, Lee's Amplify practitioner decided to support Lee to undergo the legal name change process personally, rather than referring them to an external service. Going through this process together helped Lee to deepen their relationship with their Amplify practitioner and played a critical role in their overall healing trajectory.

Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

Where relevant, the evaluation also found that the Amplify program team were able to embed co-case management with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and multicultural and multifaith organisations into their practice model, in order to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and clients from multicultural communities more effectively.

Overall, the inclusive, non-judgmental, and de-stigmatising culture of the Amplify program team was found to have a significant impact on the program's ability to work with cohorts who typically face service system exclusion. In addition to LGBTIQ+ young people, this included 15 to 17-year-olds, young people who wanted to maintain contact with the person using violence, and young people misidentified as the predominant aggressor (see section). More broadly, it contributed to young people feeling seen and recognised as active participants in their support journey – an experience that the evaluation suggested is not consistent across service settings.

"Being looked at as a human; that we know ourselves best because we live with ourselves, like anyone else, is what makes Amplify stand out. And I genuinely can only hope that other places start doing that. Because I know that a lot of places aren't. And I don't think they realise that it's a fundamental thing that should be basic." (Amplify client)

2.2.2.4 Responding to young people where they want to be supported

A final distinguishing feature of the Amplify program model is that it embeds family violence specialisation within the youth homelessness system, where evidence tells us unaccompanied young people are most likely to present. As noted previously, more than half of program referrals came from the Frontyard access point – suggesting that, in many cases, unaccompanied young people's experiences of family violence are being successfully identified when they first present to the youth homelessness system.

The evaluation found that the co-location of the Amplify program within the Frontyard youth homelessness access point enabled program staff to engage quickly with young people where they present in crisis. Amplify practitioners observed that this capacity to engage immediately and in-person with young people facilitated subsequent engagement and that, where this had not been able to occur, they often found it more difficult to connect with young people.

"[I]f we can't sort of, like, make that initial contact in person when they're [at Frontyard], it's like, we just become another stranger trying to contact them while they're in crisis. They don't know who we are." (Amplify practitioner)

External practitioners also reflected on the value of the co-location model, particularly for young people who had negative associations with mainstream family violence services. One practitioner reflected that, had it not been for Amplify's co-location with Frontyard, the young person who they were supporting would have been unlikely to consent to receiving family violence support.

"I think the fact that it was co-located with, you know, a youth-friendly service with Melbourne City Mission, and where there was also it was housing as well as family violence, it didn't seem probably as confronting and overwhelming for that young person to engage." (External practitioner)

This capacity to maintain a lens on the family violence risk of young people who would otherwise be unlikely to engage with services was echoed by other practitioners, including those working in the context of high-risk interventions, such as Risk Assessment and Management Panels (RAMPs) (see section 2.3.1.6).

The evaluation also found that situating the Amplify program within a youth homelessness provider facilitated seamless, timely collaboration with wider homelessness programs supporting young people. This included through access to timely secondary consultations, as well as the capacity for Amplify practitioners to sit down with a young person presenting to another program to conduct a joint intake or to support a conversation around their experiences of family violence.

"I think that just an enabler is having the team on site for us; it means that even if we recognise a family violence situation in our consult with a young person, like there's been times where I've just quickly run up to see [the program team], and they're like, 'I'll just quickly come down and say hello to the young person.' [It's] a really a warm referral where they've started the process already and started developing rapport." (External practitioner)

At the same time, practitioners both within and outside the program team observed that the Frontyard environment could be confronting and developmentally inappropriate for many young people engaged in the Amplify program, particularly younger clients. It is also important to note that, while young people from the age of 12 present to Frontyard seeking support, Frontyard are only legally able to house young people aged 16 and over. As a result, Amplify practitioners reported that they were often using Frontyard for initial face-to-face contact, but subsequent engagement would occur via outreach, or sometimes over the phone. This points to an ongoing need to recognise and resource outreach as a key feature of the model.

While being located within a youth homelessness service was identified as a strength of the program, practitioners also described challenges associated with being the only specialist family violence service within an organisation which primarily delivers housing and homelessness services. Reflecting on the tension between the importance of being co-located in a youth homelessness service and the difficulty of lack of family violence seniority within the organisation, one Amplify practitioner reflected:

"I would like to have somebody who knows a little bit more than me that I could learn from. But then the benefits are that we are there the moment a young person steps their foot into the homelessness system for the first time. And we can walk alongside them for that ... Also, it is really useful to have wrap around services, so we don't have to do everything. It's useful to have ... young people getting many of their needs met in the one place. It's good to be able to be a part of that. And to know that their family violence experience isn't being forgotten amidst all those other needs." (Amplify practitioner)

As such, the evaluation found significant benefits associated with the program's location within a youth homelessness service, including accessibility for young people and the capacity to draw on wraparound and in-reach services also housed within Frontyard. At the same time, clinical supervision, reflective practice, family violence-specific professional development opportunities and robust, formalised partnerships with specialist family violence services and organisations emerged as key to maintaining the capacity of the Amplify program team to hold and work with significant levels of risk (see also section 2.1.1.3).

2.3 Effectiveness

2.3.1 Outcomes for unaccompanied young people

- The Amplify program is increasing the safety of young people, including in relation to family violence risk and associated risks such as homelessness and mental ill-health. In particular, the evaluation found that the program was actively reducing suicide and self-harm risk for young people, including through the creation of opportunities for safe disclosure and reflection.
- The delivery of developmentally appropriate psychoeducation contributed to key outcomes, including supporting young people to recognise and make sense of their experiences of harm. Crucially, psychoeducation was also found to reduce potential for future harm, as young people felt more equipped to identify violence across other relationships.
- While young people were connected with various supports to address their needs, the capacity of the program to work with young people around educational and employment stood out. This in turn empowered young people to work towards financial independence, and to feel hopeful about their future.
- The program also had a range of unintended outcomes for young people, including addressing experiences of misidentification; repairing young people's sense of trust in the service system; and contributing to improved housing outcomes. Importantly, the evaluation found that all of these unintended outcomes had benefits for young people's overall safety.

2.3.1.1 Young people are identified and connected with support

The evaluation found that the Amplify program is making a strong contribution to the capacity of the service system to identify unaccompanied young people's experiences of family violence. Importantly (as noted at section 2.1.1.2), more than half of program referrals came from the Frontyard access point, meaning that, in many cases, unaccompanied young people's experiences of family violence are being identified when they first present to the youth homelessness system.

In particular, service data and practitioner interviews indicated that the confidence and capability of external MCM practitioners to identify where young people are presenting with experiences of family violence and connect them to appropriate support was improved by the capacity building support that was provided by the Amplify program team (see 2.3.2.1 for further detail).

External practitioners, both within and outside of MCM services, reflected that the existence of the Amplify program had directly led to a young victim survivor being believed, identified and connected with support, often after a long period of service system exclusion. One school principal, who had worked with Amplify in the context of supporting a student who was engaged in the program, stated:

"The situation with the student we were dealing with was quite complex, and it had been investigated for many years to no avail. And I think it was really refreshing to be able to work with someone who didn't just dismiss the young person's concerns." (School principal)

Reflecting on the particular invisibility of young people with experiences of family of origin violence within the broader service system, one Amplify practitioner reflected on specific forms of violence and harm which are enacted on young people but are missing from the MARAM risk assessment tools. These particular forms of harm are therefore less likely to arise in a conversation about risk.

"[The wider service system] just don't see it and they don't ask the right questions around it so they can't identify it. But if you were to say to a Safe Steps worker, you know, some of the stuff that isn't captured in the MARAM is this young person isn't being given food ... that worker will be like, 'okay, that is really serious, I can hear the impact that that's having.' But it won't come up because it's not identified as one of the risk factors on the MARAM. Which makes sense, because the MARAM is looking at a completely different cohort that are having completely different experiences." (Amplify practitioner)

The co-location of the Amplify program within Frontyard was also highlighted by an external practitioner as important both to the program's capacity to identify young people who met the program's eligibility criteria, as well as to signal to those young people that their experiences were serious and that they deserved support.

"It also shows the young person when there's a specialist family violence service involved [within a youth service] you're indicating that yes you are important and what is happening with you is really important and that's why we've brought this specialist service [in]." (External practitioner)

In another particularly powerful reflection, one external practitioner spoke about the value of the Amplify program's psychoeducational support in empowering young people to discuss their wider community about family violence.

"[Conversations about family violence are] really important because you're talking to one young person, but they have a whole group of friends. I've experienced this with one of the young people that I was working with [where] one day, they got really comfortable and started talking about this friend of theirs who is also experiencing family violence. And they were able to identify that and they're like, 'Oh, I advised my friend that, I told them it is not okay that they are going through family violence.' So [if young people] are getting that education [and] awareness, which they are passing on to their cohort or closer friends ... You never know who it may encourage to reach out to appropriate services." (External practitioner)

In this sense, the evaluation found that responses like the Amplify program can also contribute to community uplift in terms of young people's own capacity to identify experiences of violence amongst their peer group and encourage them to seek help.

2.3.1.2 Young people have their experiences recognised

The evaluation found strong evidence that the Amplify program has contributed to increased understanding of young people's individual risk and safety goals, with service data indicating that at least 84 percent of closed Amplify clients had at least one comprehensive risk assessment completed; 89 percent had at least one safety plan completed; and information-sharing had occurred for all clients. In circumstances where risk assessment and safety planning did not occur, this was often because young people were presenting with acute mental ill-health, psychosis and suicide risk that meant that conducting a risk assessment or safety plan would be unsafe or inappropriate.

As outlined at section 2.2.2.1, the program staff drew on their deep expertise and experience to adapt MARAM risk assessment and safety planning processes as required to provide a more holistic understanding of young people's risk profile and safety goals. This included by assessing forms of risk which related to the young person's experiences of family violence but are not necessarily captured within a traditional family violence risk assessment – such as mental health risk (including where this has been compounded by experiences of trauma and harm) and risks associated with homelessness.

More holistic understanding of risk, such as the risk of cyclical homelessness forcing young people to return to a violent home or enter into other coercive relationships, also meant that the program could more effectively identify possible future harms that clients may experience and safety plan accordingly.

Young people who participated in interviews described the validating and healing impact of having their experiences of harm, including family violence, listened to, documented and recognised.

"When I did do my MARAM, [my Amplify practitioner] was like, hey, you know, this isn't normal, you know, you don't deserve this at all. You shouldn't experience this. Like it's so simple, but I needed to hear that because I genuinely thought what I was experiencing was normal ... she made me feel like I'm not actually crazy ... I just felt really good about the experience because I was really suffering." (Amplify client)

Each of the young people who participated in interviews as part of this evaluation disclosed feelings of questioning their own lived experience. This was either because of being actively gaslit by the person using violence; having their experiences minimised or invalidated during service system interactions; or because their experience of violence did not conform to normative societal representations of family violence dynamics.

"I didn't believe I was a victim because, you know, we're all mainly told you know, 'oh you're only a victim if you're in the [intimate] relationship', like, that's what's usually kind of plastered everywhere ... But it's never really about, you know, that kids can be victims as well." (Amplify client)

In some circumstances, young people described using self-deprecation or humour as a coping mechanism because they were not yet ready to acknowledge the scale of violence to which they had been subjected. One young person who participated in an interview reflected that it was only through having their experiences validated by the Amplify program team that they were able to name what they had been through as family violence and begin to process the harm that they had survived.

"I guess, I thought it wasn't that bad. I'd just laugh about it. And then, like, after talking about it more, [I realised] that was really bad. I guess, yeah, they kind of helped me realise, like, I shouldn't have had to go through that stuff... Because I knew it was bad but, like, I would just see it as a joke, I guess. Because I didn't know how to, like, process stuff." (Amplify client)

The evaluation also identified that the ability of Amplify practitioners to recognise young people's experiences meant that they were able to build relationships of trust and safety with clients, actively promoting disclosures and understanding of family violence risk (see section 2.3.1.4).

Importantly, the evaluation found that feeling heard and validated laid important foundations for young people's future healing and recovery and created space for young people to make disclosures – not only about their experiences of family violence, but also about wider experiences of risk and harm, including self-harm and thoughts of suicide (see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Practice example (Pierce)

Practice example (Pierce)

The Amplify program were working with Pierce around his experiences of family violence. During the period of service engagement, Pierce began to experience significant mental ill-health and went to hospital in relation to suicidal ideation. Upon presenting to hospital, Pierce texted his Amplify practitioner asking for help.

In this instance, the Amplify practitioner shared that information with other workers; conducted a secondary consult with a mental health peer worker; and provided ongoing emotional support to Pierce until he had left hospital and was re-engaged with other supports.

Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

This example demonstrates the program team's capacity to scaffold young people's engagement with acute mental health services to ensure that the young person feels safe and that a lens is maintained on their family violence risk.

Amplify practitioners further explained the importance of recognising and validating young people's experiences in building the foundations for a strong therapeutic relationship. In some cases, program staff reflected that young people needed a trusted adult to listen to and acknowledge the harm that they had experienced before they were able to take steps towards safety and recovery.

"I had a young person who was just, like, not sure that she was going to make it to a refuge intake and I was, like, panicking a little bit trying to get her there, [but] by the end of that conversation, she'd calmed right down, and she was like, 'yeah, I'll go get my stuff, and I'll go.' She actually just needed someone to hear how hard it was and to be like, 'I know it's hard, please keep going.'" (Amplify practitioner)

Importantly, where young people were able to have their experiences validated by their Amplify worker and build a relationship of mutual trust, practitioners reflected that this was often instrumental in their capacity to place trust in other people.

"I've had a couple of young people turn 18 and be like, 'I don't feel ready to turn 18, I'm not an adult yet, I just want somebody to look after me.' [...] Sometimes we can kind of be a person that is, like, an adult that shows them respect, and that trusts them and listens to them, that can kind of repair their kind of trust in the world that there are adults who won't hurt them. Which is like, very hard to quantify or prove that we're doing, but I do feel like you can see it in the fact that young people keep speaking with us." (Amplify practitioner)

External practitioners similarly noted young people's increased confidence and capacity for safety planning and recovery after engaging with the Amplify program. In many cases, external practitioners observed that this change stemmed from having their experiences as a victim survivor recognised and validated by program staff.

"I think the young people then go away feeling less unsure of themselves. I think if you are isolated in your experience of family violence, you might just think that it's you ... I think a lot of young people don't place responsibility on the user of violence but take it on themselves and adapt to keep themselves safe. But hearing that what the user of violence is doing is not acceptable to them, is really empowering. And often leads to conversations that increase safety." (External practitioner)

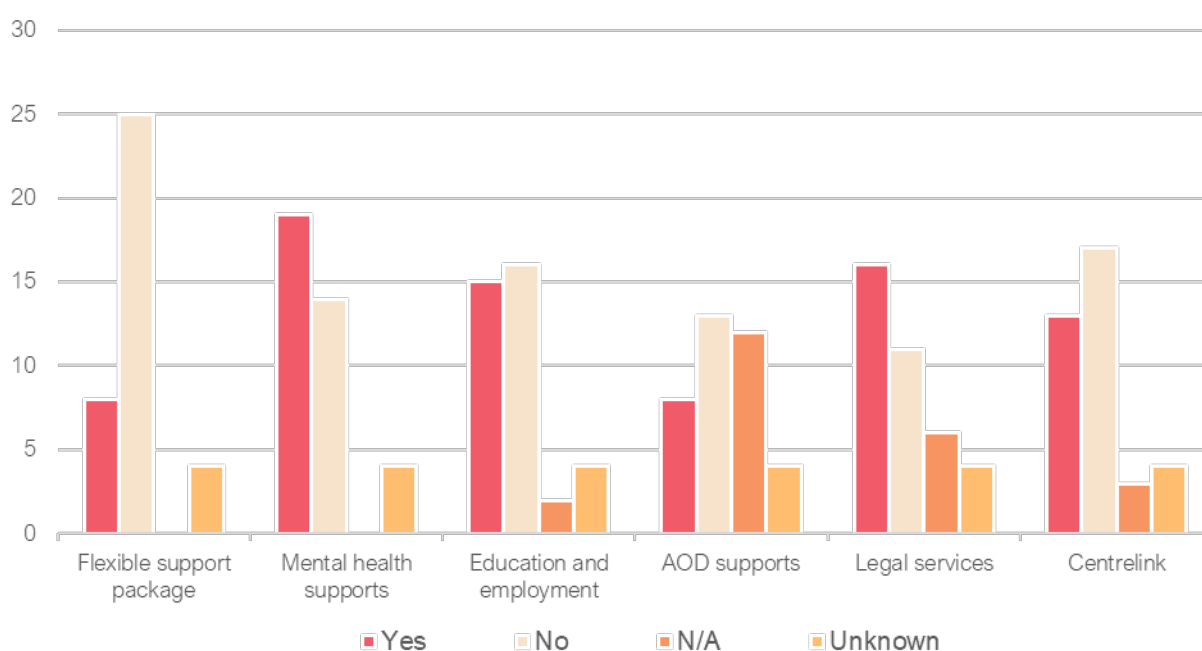
This outcome emerged as particularly crucial given that many young people supported through the program have had multiple experiences of not being believed. In addition, the foundation of trust that practitioners were able to build with young people created clear opportunities for ongoing disclosure and safety planning, resulting in improvements in safety over time.

2.3.1.3 Young people are supported to engage with wider supports, including education

The evaluation found that the Amplify program supported young people to engage with a wide range of supports, both within and outside of MCM's suite of services.

Program data indicates that more than one fifth of young people whose engagement with the program completed during the pilot period were supported to access and/or manage a flexible support package (22%); more than one third were supported to access Centrelink (35%); more than one fifth were supported to engage with AOD supports (22%); and almost half were connected with legal services (43%). More than half of young people were supported to access mental health services and support (51%) (see Figure 15).

Figure 15: Supports young people were supported to access and engage with



Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

In focus groups, practitioners from wider services reflected on the thoughtful and considered nature of referrals made by the Amplify program team. Practitioners felt that these referrals resulted in more effective and meaningful service engagement for young people, rather than an 'output-focussed' approach in which the referral itself is the end goal.

"[B]ecause they've got such a good understanding of the entire sector, and like, I feel like their referrals are more appropriate; they're more successful. The young person has sort of like a bit more ability to follow what's happening because there aren't sort of like referrals being made that aren't working out." (External practitioner)

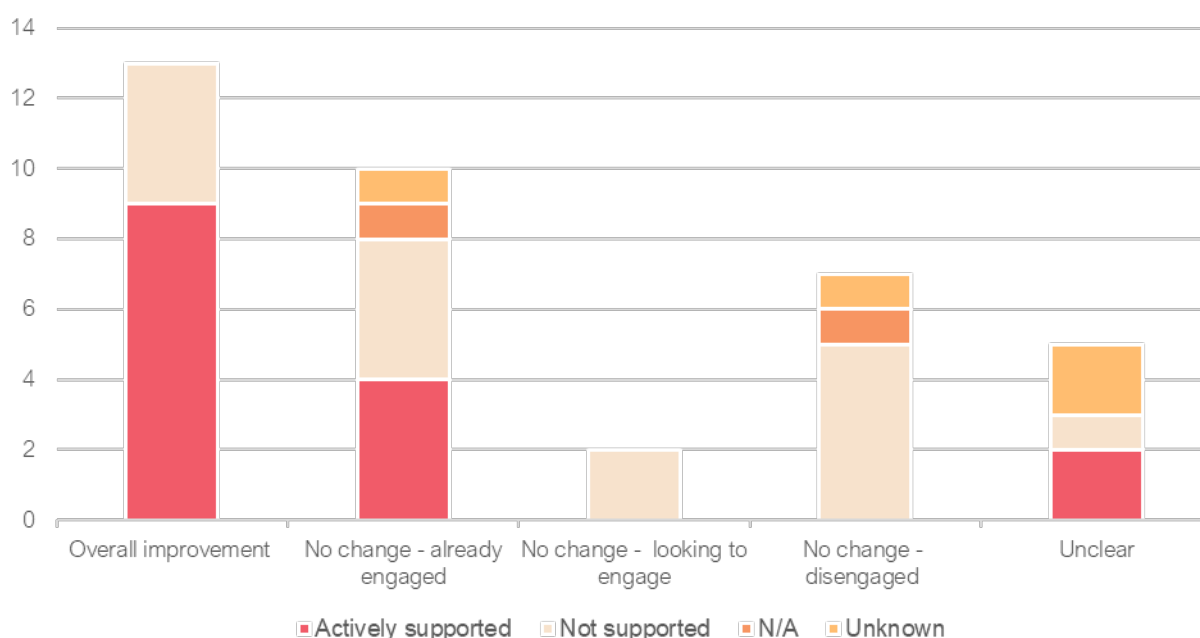
The evaluation also found that the Amplify program's ability to support young people to develop and maintain routines that ensured continued engagement with wider services and supports was particularly impactful and a relatively unique feature of the program.

"[I] started getting into habits again, and I'm actually on the spectrum, so it's, like, habits, like, helped me so much mentally that it's, like, there's so much, like, a dopamine boost if I'm, like, able to be in a habit. Because, since I have, like, the resources I need, like, even going to the gym became a habit, being able to go to school became a habit." (Amplify client)

Education and employment emerged as a particularly relevant protective factor for young people, conferring a range of benefits including structure, peer relationships and, in the case of employment, income and financial independence. Of the 37 young people who had received case management and subsequently been closed, more than one third had improved engagement with education and/or employment when leaving the program relative to when they entered (35%). A further one quarter of young people were able to maintain engagement in education or employment over the course of their program engagement, despite their experiences of homelessness and continuing family violence risk.

Overall, 40 percent of young people who received case management received direct support in relation to their education and employment goals. Of those, more than half experienced an overall improvement in their engagement (or readiness to engage) with employment or education (60%), while more than one quarter were able to maintain their engagement. Only one-fifth of young people (19%) remained disengaged from education and employment at the point of closure. Here it is useful to note that none of these young people received direct support in relation to education or employment, either because they were not ready to work towards these goals or did not identify them as a priority (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: Employment and education outcomes



Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

Support provided by the Amplify program to promote school engagement included advocating to schoolteachers and wellbeing staff on behalf of young people to ensure that their educational goals were understood and actively supported. It also included facilitating young people's access to practical necessities, such as laptops, printers and internet.

"I was able to get a laptop to start studying soon. I was able to get a hefty amount for groceries. Public transport was taken care of." (Amplify client)

Young people who participated in interviews reflected strongly on the capacity of the Amplify program to support them to re-engage with education, either through direct advocacy and material support, or as a byproduct of having reduced family violence risk and general stress.

"I can focus on school, you know, like my school has been improving, I can focus on the things that I love doing." (Amplify client)

Young people also explained the significance of Amplify's support in directly and indirectly enabling them to gain employment and financial independence, particularly where they had endured prolonged periods of poverty or had been financially reliant on a person using violence.

"I can happily say that I signed the offer [of employment] yesterday, which I think has put a lot of my stress at ease ... the whole point of the unemployment benefit is just survival. It's not a living thing. So, being able to break free of that, to get to a place where they've looked at my resume and gone, 'We'll give this [kid] a try.' It's great." (Amplify client)

Notably, improved outcomes in relation to education and employment, as well as the capacity of young people to maintain any engagement which pre-existed their entry into the Amplify program, appear to be linked with a young person's access to stable housing. This relationship is discussed further at section 2.3.1.7.

Other examples in which young people were supported to engage with protective factors and develop increased capacity to experience and enjoy 'normal' adolescence included re-engagement with hobbies, positive relationships, engagement with mental health supports and the development of healthy coping mechanisms. Reflecting on the impact of their engagement with the Amplify program, one young person stated:

"I can spend my time with the people I love, whilst also maintaining a job, paying rent, hanging out with my friends, having a boyfriend." (Amplify client)

Where relevant, the evaluation found that the Amplify program team were able to make appropriate, timely referrals to legal services, as well as support young people to engage in legal processes that might otherwise be overwhelming or intimidating. The evaluation found that the capacity of the team to identify legal issues and proactively link young people with legal support was particularly valuable where clients were either criminalised or at risk of criminalisation (see Figure 17). This included, but was not limited to, through Youthlaw's in-reach service within the Frontyard access point.

Figure 17: Practice example (Esther)

Practice example

Esther was referred to Amplify because of her experiences of intimate partner violence. When Esther disclosed that she had been in contact with police multiple times while experiencing street-based homelessness, Amplify spoke to Esther and made a referral to a Community Legal Centre. The Community Legal Centre found that Esther had a number of upcoming court matters, and were able to work with the Amplify program team to ensure that her legal needs were met without causing undue stress or overwhelm for Esther.

Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

Crucially, the evaluation also found that Amplify practitioners supported young people to engage with wider supports in a safe way by ensuring that a lens on family violence risk and safety was maintained throughout their engagement. This included examples in which Amplify practitioners collaborated with homelessness and housing case management services to ensure that the support needs and trauma backgrounds of the young person being referred were kept in view; expediting young people's access to key services, such as mental health supports and refuge placements by providing relevant risk information; and supporting young people to engage with Child Protection and to feel safe and heard in those interactions.

This support was seen as beneficial for Amplify's client cohort generally, but particularly for young people who had experienced or continued to experience systems abuse by an adult perpetrator who used their position as the young person's parent or legal guardian to prevent young people from accessing key supports and entitlements (see section 2.4.2.2). Reflecting on Amplify's advocacy to statutory services on their behalf, one young person stated:

"[My Amplify worker] helped us when Child Protection wasn't listening to us. [They were] on the phone with them, [they] did, like, I think it's called, a MARAM and explained to them how, like, it's actually really bad and you guys need to help the children. And then after that, Child Protection started listening." (Amplify client)

Along similar lines, another young person described the impact of the program team's advocacy when engaging with a private psychologist who had been engaged by their abusive parent.

"They also helped the psychologists listen to us because, at the start, the psychologist just believed our [violent parent] and said that we have false memories, and she was telling us that she studied false memories and that's her specific area that's why my [violent parent] picked her ... but then [my Amplify worker] spoke to her ... and she started to get it." (Amplify client)

Finally, it is important to note that, while it was a goal of the Amplify program (as a time limited intervention) to build capacity for young people to navigate the service system alone, early evidence suggests that this is not a realistic outcome for all young people engaged in the program. This was particularly true for the younger members of Amplify's client base; for those with deeply ingrained distrust of the service system based on past negative experiences; and for those experiencing acute mental ill-health, alcohol and drug use, as well as criminalisation. This finding is also a reflection of the extremely complex nature of the service system, as well as emerging evidence that engagement with mainstream, non-youth specialist services alone is not likely to be a safe or affirming experience for all young people.

As such, while there were examples of young people who described feeling ready and confident to navigate the service system on their own, this was not reflective of the client base as a whole. In this context, Amplify's flexible approach to service timeframes emerged as a crucial factor in the program's capacity to build safety in a meaningful way and disrupt trajectories of harm.

2.3.1.4 Young people are able to make sense of their experiences

One of the strongest and most impactful outcomes identified by the evaluation was the capacity of the program to provide young people with safe opportunities to disclose, reflect on, and make sense of their experiences of harm. Practitioner focus groups, case studies and interviews with program clients all emphasised the strength of the Amplify program team's approach to talking to young people about family violence.

Service data indicated that all Amplify clients were engaged in developmentally appropriate psychoeducational conversations about harm at various points in their involvement with the program. As discussed in section 2.3.1.2, the capacity of Amplify practitioners to build respectful relationships with clients and deliver developmentally appropriate psychoeducational support laid the foundations for young people to make disclosures in an affirming and trauma-informed environment. As a result, Amplify practitioners and external practitioners alike observed increased confidence of young people to reflect on and make sense of their experiences.

"There is a greater understanding ... of what they've experienced and what is available to them. Often, they will come in without much of an understanding, [the violence is] just kind of normalised or it's not seen as bad or the negative impacts of it may not even be apparent to them. But through Amplify, they're actually able to recognise what's going on." (External practitioner)

One external practitioner also described how, through their engagement with the Amplify program, a client was increasingly comfortable and able to put language around their experiences of family violence and proactively share risk information. This in turn meant that the homelessness case manager was able to work towards the young person's housing goals with a clearer understanding of how ongoing family violence risk may need to be accounted for.

“That client is still in that family violence dynamic with their partner. But [their] engagement with Amplify has kept that at the forefront for that young person; I'm able to talk to that young person regularly around how that's going ... what I've seen is that young person's more willing to speak about their relationship with their partner, what the family violence is like, what the risk factors are, and we can talk through safety managing those situations a lot more freely with that young person, and the young person's a lot more open to it.” (External practitioner)

Amplify practitioners themselves reflected on the importance of family violence psychoeducation not only in providing young people with the language to describe their experiences, but also in supporting them to identify patterns of coercion and violence across different relationships.

“One young woman I worked with had quite high-risk intimate partner violence which was the focus of a lot of our work – just that psychoeducation around respectful relationships ... It has been this huge learning experience, where she's gone from not really wanting to talk about her relationship at all, to talking about what was happening, to identifying it as violence, and now also experiencing violence from Mum, she reflects on those experiences by going 'oh, 'that's just like what he did to me.' And it's not the same type of violence, but it makes her feel the same way, and so she's able to identify that even though it's very different, it's about the power dynamics and how it impacts her.” (Amplify practitioner)

This finding suggests that the psychoeducational support delivered through the Amplify program has the potential to reduce risk across young people's wider relationships, including within their family of origin and in future intimate relationships. In this way, the program demonstrates capacity not only to reduce current risk, but to disrupt further trajectories of harm. The sense of empowerment that young people derived from giving voice to and understanding their experiences was observed by external practitioners, with one practitioner reflecting on the impact of Amplify's psychoeducation and case management in enabling young people to self-advocate – including in their interactions with wider services.

“You see this sort of sense of empowerment that the young people that have worked with Amplify seem to have as compared to other people who haven't had the support of Amplify. I think the way that they do really intensive case management and a lot of education and support for young people to understand the violence that they're experiencing gives the young person the capacity to start to advocate for themselves a little bit as well.” (External practitioner)

The evaluation also found that making senses of their experiences of violence was an important pre-requisite of young people's longer-term recovery and capacity to live the kind of life that they wanted for themselves.

"My goal was when I went in was, my goal was I wanted to get through the stuff that I experienced when I was living with my mother. I didn't want to be this person who was stuck ... I wanted to be someone who can communicate. I wanted to be someone who wasn't self-harming. I wanted to be someone who was happy and actually wanted to live and wanted to be around." (Amplify client)

In some cases, having the language and conceptual frameworks to process and describe their experiences helped young people to feel less alone and stigmatised.

"It kind of felt like, you know, like, there's a weight off your shoulder. Like, you're not the only, like, you know. And they also told me, like, they see this, like, it's a common thing. Like, you're not the only one." (Program participant)

Young people also described the impact of psychoeducational support as not only enabling them to make sense of their experiences, but as transformative to their overall growth and independence as emerging adults.

"I definitely have changed a lot as a person since my first interaction with Amplify to now, but it was just more of finding myself, figuring my shit out and getting through that becoming an adult like becoming an independent adult and how to manage that right." (Amplify client)

2.3.1.5 Young people benefit from peer support

During the pilot period, approximately one quarter of closed clients (24%) received peer support at some stage during their program engagement. As highlighted in section 2.2.2.3, the presence and impact of the Peer Support Worker role was deeply valued by young people, as well as internal and external practitioners. Peer support was delivered to approximately one quarter of young people engaged with the program, as well as being delivered to all young people on active hold.

On a fundamental level, young people engaged in peer support described the value of working with someone with lived experience of family violence in supporting them to feel comfortable making disclosures, including disclosures of system harm.

"I'm not able to talk about like stuff – like, I didn't have the best experience with some mental health services ... I feel like I can't talk to other people [about it]. And I was able to just like talk to [my Peer Support Worker] about it. And like [they] actually agreed with me ... so it made me feel a bit better, that I wasn't like complaining for nothing." (Amplify client)

The importance of lived experience within the family violence workforce was also identified by the program's Peer Support Worker. Reflecting on their own experience in the service system as a young person, the Peer Support Worker described the sense of hope that they felt upon finding out that one of their workers was also a victim survivor.

"When I was in case management, I found out that one of my [workers] had lived experience, and that was just like a huge revelation for me of like, 'wow, things can work out'. And, you know, you can end up doing all of this great stuff even if you've had these really shit experiences ... Life doesn't end at a certain point, you know, like, it does get better." (Amplify Peer Support Worker)

Amplify practitioners and external practitioners similarly noted that the benefits of this role included supporting young people to navigate and feel safe in service settings which they otherwise found unsafe or triggering; enhancing the program's capacity to actively 'hold' young people whose support and safety needs had reduced but not completely resolved; and building young people's self-esteem and confidence by enabling them to connect with someone who has been through similar experiences. One external practitioner observed:

"And that is hugely important and useful for my young people, particularly because the reality is a lot of young people who are experiencing family violence with that have a low self-esteem, have a low self-worth, and [the Peer Support Worker's] support around that is fundamental." (External practitioner)

Throughout practitioner focus groups and service data, the evaluation found that the Peer Support Worker role was particularly critical for young people whose needs and risk presentations were particularly complex, as well as for young people whose distrust towards the service system was particularly acute. In these circumstances, the evaluation found that peer support could act as a more gentle, slow paced introduction to service system engagement for young people who were not yet ready to engage in formal case management. The Amplify Peer Support Worker observed that the informal and relational focus of peer support work could remove critical barriers that typically prevent vulnerable young people from seeking support or engaging with case management.

"I think peer support has also been helpful ... for young people who are maybe not ready to access case management, or who maybe don't have that much trust in services. They're sometimes a little bit more willing to continue working with me because I can sort of, you know, come out to their place, it's really removed from Frontyard and from the rest of the services and it can just be that more like relational work." (Amplify Peer Support Worker)

One young person specifically stated that, without the Peer Support Worker's capacity to provide outreach support, they would likely have disengaged with the Amplify program.

"Yeah, I think [outreach] helps a lot because I don't think I'd even be like, seeing [the Peer Support Worker] if I had to go into the city because it's a lot." (Amplify client)

In another example, a young person described how their Amplify Peer Support Worker would regularly meet them at a dog park nearby. For this young person, having therapeutic conversations and undergoing safety planning while being around animals helped them to self-regulate and feel safe while navigating conversation topics that could be painful or triggering.

"I'm not a very calm person but, with animals, I feel a bit better with animals. Because if I have to talk about something stressful, like, it makes me stay calm." (Amplify client)

Program staff also described the capacity of the peer support role to step outside of necessarily goal-oriented case management support and keep young people feeling connected and supported – even where their primary presenting needs and goals have been resolved. This type of support was seen as particularly important for young victim survivors who may not have robust communities or protective relationships in their lives.

"The work that [the Peer Support Worker] does with young people is really important because, even though we can work with young people for quite a while, we still have to ultimately close when then they have no needs that we can meet ... We're very goal-focused and outcome-focused, whereas the work that [the Peer Support Worker does is] more relational, which is so much more important for the young people in being able to navigate the world, especially as new adults who don't have many connections." (Amplify practitioner)

The value of relational work was echoed by the Peer Support Worker, who described the value of the peer support role for young people who had grown up without any safe adults in their lives.

"I think for some young people, they've definitely had experiences in the past where they've had relationship breakdowns, but they might not have had experiences where the other person has made a genuine effort to try to resolve that in an appropriate, healthy way. I think if I have the opportunity to have those uncomfortable conversations and to try to do it in a safe enough way ... it is a really good learning opportunity for both of us." (Amplify Peer Support Worker)

Above all else, the evaluation found that the value of young people having a positive, trusted touchpoint and role model within the service system could not be over-stated. Reflecting on this point, the Peer Support Worker explained:

"[Being] able to connect with someone who represents some of what they've been through and being able to see that there is hope and possibility for the future [is important for young people]. Having gone through the experience that they're currently going through, [that] doesn't mean that that is going to be the case for the rest of their life. Like, there is the other side, you do come out on the other side ..." (Amplify Peer Support Worker)

2.3.1.6 Young people have their safety needs addressed

The evaluation found that the Amplify program was often able to address and reduce family violence risk, despite significant barriers to accessing key supports, including rapid re-housing and flexible support packages. The ways in which family violence risk was reduced were diverse, responding to the needs, resources and safety goals of each young person – including the extent to which they were able to access alternative, safe housing. Examples of how the Amplify program worked alongside young people to reduce family violence risk are outlined at Figure 18.

Figure 18: Examples of family violence risk management strategies and actions

Risk management strategies and actions used within the Amplify program

- Providing safety planning where young people needed to return home to retrieve belongings
- Advocating for separate refuge placements where young people experiencing intimate partner violence had been placed with their partner
- Advocating for priority access to refuge or other emergency accommodation (including adult family violence crisis accommodation) where risk is serious and ongoing
- Advocating to services, including refuges and Centrelink, who wanted to contact an adult perpetrator to seek consent to engage with a young person, verify a disclosure made by the young person (about that adult), or otherwise communicate with them about the young person's whereabouts and attempts to engage with services
- Supporting young people identified as Affected Family Members on FVIOs to feel confident reporting breaches to police, either independently or through a support person
- Supporting young people who were misidentified as the respondent on an FVIO to connect with appropriate legal support
- Conducting 'tech sweeps' to mitigate the risk of technology-enabled surveillance or pursuit by a person using violence
- Consulting with specialist family violence Risk Assessment and Management Panel (RAMP) co-ordinators for young people who are experiencing particularly high-risk family violence
- Engaging in thorough safety planning to support safe, client-led reunification with family members where there had been a rupture or relationship breakdown
- Advocating to Child Protection and holding space for young people to disclose their experiences and goals in that context, resulting in more risk-informed decisions being made

Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of client interviews and case studies.

These examples demonstrate the varied, client-led ways in which the Amplify program is having tangible impacts on young people's family violence risk and safety – including through practical supports such as tech sweeps; facilitating access to safe accommodation; and limiting opportunities for other parts of the service system to collude with an adult perpetrator or otherwise escalate family violence risk (see also Figure 19 and section 2.4.2.2).

Figure 19: Practice example (Jeet)

Practice example

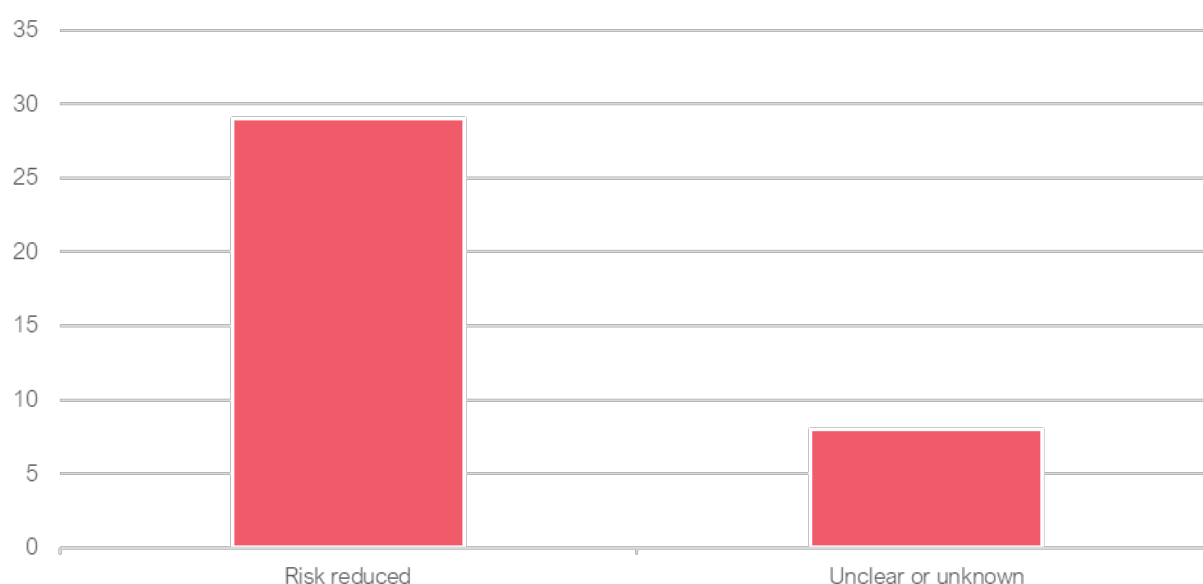
Jeet moved in with her Aunty and Uncle to escape family violence in her family of origin, voicing her preference for this self-placement to Child Protection. Because of her movement between school catchments, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing sought consent from the parent using violence in order to approve the enrolment transfer to the new school. This allowed for the continuation of systems abuse against Jeet by her parents, as she was unable to re-engage with her education until the transfer was approved.

Jeet's Amplify practitioner liaised with the relevant schools, the Department of Education, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Jeet, and her protective family members, to clarify the transfer process and to advocate for alternative, safer mechanisms for seeking consent.

Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

Qualitative findings relating to the program's capacity to reduce family violence risk are echoed in available service data, which indicates that almost four fifths of closed clients (78%) experienced a reduction in family violence risk across their engagement with the program (see Figure 20). This included where they had ceased contact with the person using violence; maintained some level of contact; or where the person using violence had been incarcerated – a factor which, at least temporarily, reduces risk. Four young people presenting in relation to their experiences of intimate partner violence remained in a relationship with the person using violence, although risk had been assessed as reduced for all but one.

Figure 20: Summary of family violence risk change



Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

Important to note is that, at program exit, five young people had gone on to experience violence in new relationships. Of these, three had since left these violent relationships, while two remained at risk. This reflects the increased likelihood that young people who have experienced violence – whether in intimate partner relationships or in their family of origin – will go on to experience violence in subsequent relationships. The evaluation (and wider research) suggested that this risk is particularly acute for young people rendered homeless because of their experiences of violence, as this can increase their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse.

Rapport building and the development of trusting relationships therefore emerged as perhaps one of the most significant ways in which the Amplify program team were able to meet the safety needs of young people. This includes where young people go on to experience violence in subsequent relationships, making a safe touchpoint in the system an important avenue for identifying and responding to future risk and harm.

“The biggest [measure of safety], is building that trusting relationship, so that when things are happening, they feel comfortable telling us that they’re happening.” (Amplify practitioner)

The evaluation found that the capacity of the Amplify program to build relationships of trust and mutual respect laid the foundations for all other program activities, namely accurate and safe risk assessment, client-led safety planning and psychoeducation. The value of relationship building was found to be particularly important both where young people had experienced significant system harm, and where young people did not have other trusted adult relationships in their life.

Aside from building safe relationships with practitioners, both young people and the Amplify program team reflected that family reunification was an important safety outcome for some young people engaged in the program.

“I am a bit more ready to, like, be around my family and I have been there multiple times since I started [engaging with Amplify]. And I think, like, it’s made it a bit easier because I know, like, if something happens and I need to talk about it, I have someone there.” (Amplify client)

The capacity to support young people to navigate their relationships with people who have enacted harm against them emerged as particularly crucial for this cohort, with almost one third of young people maintaining contact with the person using violence at program closure and a further 16 percent still residing with the person using violence.

Outside the context of family reunification, which, it should be noted, was not a safe or desirable goal for many young people, the evaluation found that the Amplify program was able to support young people to foster safe, trusting relationships outside the family unit. One young person reflected on the value of their ‘chosen family’, which they felt they were able to maintain because of the support they received through the Amplify program.

"[I've chosen] my own family, we had Christmas last year. And it was just me, my housemate, and my best friend. That was so much more meaningful. We didn't have a whole lot of food, but we just got presents for each other. And then I did the whole, 'Oh my God, look Santa has a gift for us guys. I wonder who that is.' You know? And it was just, it was nice." (Amplify client)

The evaluation also found that the capacity of the program to support young people to achieve improved housing outcomes, often through co-case management with other MCM services (see 2.3.1.7), had a significant impact on young people's overall safety. This included significantly reducing the risk of young people returning to their violent home, or ending up in other unsafe, exploitative environments. In addition, the evaluation identified that, though it was not always a possible or realistic outcome, where young people were supported to build safe homes of their own, this was a critically important safety outcome and contributed to positive identity formation.

"But then when you get things like a bed frame and a set of drawers, you feel like you're kind of normal, if that makes sense ... I don't know, like, it really, like, boosts your mood sometimes even if it's just, like, randomly on a Tuesday or something. You're just, like, how nice is it that all of this is mine? Like, I own this stuff ..." (Amplify client)

The evaluation also identified strong evidence that the Amplify program was able to support young people's safety in terms of suicide and self-harm risk, which was, unfortunately, a significant concern for many of the young people engaged in the program. Reflecting on the capacity of the Amplify program team to improve young people's mental health outcomes, one external practitioner stated:

"It definitely lowers the risk of self-harm and suicidality ... It's a no-brainer ... Family violence is a significant driver of homelessness, and the system doesn't really recognise young people as victim survivors in their own right. So, Amplify fills that gap that we've had here forever." (External practitioner)

The evaluation suggested that the Amplify program reduced mental health risk in multiple ways – including, first and foremost, by creating safe opportunities for young people to disclose and reflect on their mental health, including suicidality and self-harm. Practitioners reflected on the need to have the confidence to have these conversations with young people, particularly where they were not engaging with formal mental health or therapeutic supports.

The capacity to have conversations about mental health sits alongside the program's core focus of supporting young people to reflect on and unpack their experiences of trauma, including (but not limited to) family violence – often for the first time. The evaluation found that the ability of the Amplify program to have conversations about trauma and its impacts in a holistic way and at a pace set by the young person, reduced the risk of re-traumatisation and contributed to better mental health outcomes.

More broadly, the evaluation found that the program's capacity to reduce feelings of overwhelm and provide young people with space for reflection and action had important benefits for young people's mental health. The program did this in a range of ways, including through the delivery of practical support, outreach, system navigation and advocating to wider services – all of which reduces the burden on the young person. Reflecting on the impacts of the program's support on their mental health, one young person said:

"I was very lost, very depressed like cutting, you know doing all of that sort of stuff which was really negative, it wasn't making me feel good. But the stress was taken away right, I was getting the support I needed, and I could focus on being."
(Amplify client)

Perhaps most significantly, the evaluation found that the Amplify program was, quite frequently, the only service that vulnerable young victim survivors felt safe engaging with. As a result, the Amplify program was often the only thing tethering young people at high risk of death or serious harm to the service system and keeping that risk in view. Speaking about the degree of safety risk faced by a mutual client, a RAMP coordinator described:

"By the time it had reached the RAMP referral, the level of coercive control was very, very, very significant. So, this person using violence was using a lot of different coercive control techniques and strategies to control and isolate this victim survivor. They had control over finances, over their housing. They'd isolated that person from family, friends ... And, then there were also other really high-risk indicators including sexual abuse, physical assault, strangulation, AOD coercion. There were concerns for the victim survivor's mental health." (External practitioner)

Reflecting on this case, the RAMP coordinator observed that it was the young person's willingness to stay connected with Amplify, where mainstream family violence services had been unable to establish and maintain engagement, that allowed the system to maintain a lens on her safety. This in turn meant that risk – including risk of lethality and serious harm – could be assessed, managed and meaningfully reduced over time.

"I honestly think that if it hadn't been Amplify, I don't think this young person would have engaged with a service at all. I think that there had been attempts by Orange Door to engage with this person, and that didn't go well. And I believe there'd also been attempts with Safe Steps to engage this young person, and that also didn't eventuate." (External practitioner)

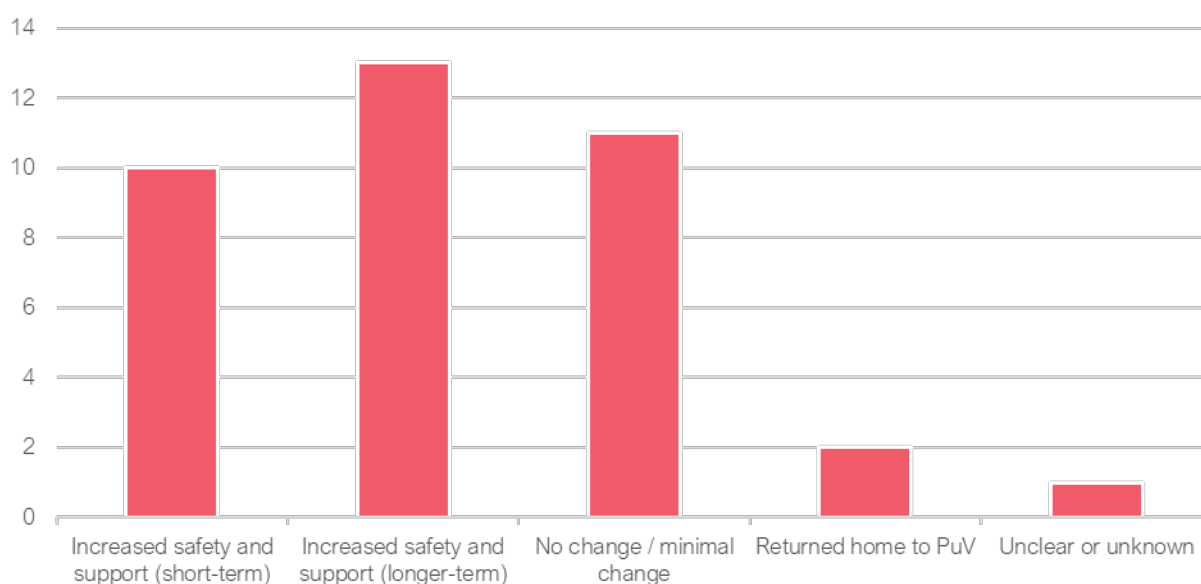
2.3.1.7 Other unintended outcomes for young people

Beyond the intended outcomes set out in the program's Theory of Change (see **Appendix A**), the program appears to be contributing to several unintended – but important – outcomes for young people. These are outlined below.

Actively contributing to improved housing outcomes

While the Amplify program is not intended to function as a homelessness service, the evaluation found that Amplify practitioners did actively contribute to improved housing outcomes for young people engaged in the program – with program data indicating that, for more than half of closed young people (62%), their housing situation had improved at the point of closure. This included more than one third of closed program clients (35%) who were in longer-term or sustainable housing or accommodation and more than one quarter (27%) who had experienced shorter-term improvements, such as access to emergency accommodation or refuge. These numbers do not include those young people who remained residing with the person using violence (6), but who may have experienced increased safety in this environment through safety planning and other supports. Crucially, only two young people returned home to the person using violence over the course of their program engagement (see Figure 21).

Figure 21: Housing outcomes for closed clients



Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

The ability of the Amplify program team to work closely with young people to get a more complete picture of their needs, goals and strengths, as well as their capacity to work flexibly and 'follow' young people where they moved across refuges and catchment areas, were integral to these improvements in housing outcomes. This in turn meant that the Amplify program was often the most consistent and trusted service presence in a young person's life, making it easier for Amplify programs to engage with young people and provide material and administrative support (such as supporting young people to complete paperwork).

Notably, this also included the capacity of the program team, where appropriate, to scaffold young people's safe engagement with family violence refuge environments, including through the establishment of service agreements with Safe Steps and GenWest to facilitate access to their emergency accommodation. While adult family violence refuge was not a developmentally appropriate option for every client, the evaluation found that, where applicable, the advocacy of the program team, including being able to give voice to the level of risk that clients were experiencing, contributed significantly to improved outcomes.

"It bypasses the process where they would get turned away basically. Because it's like inevitably they'll get turned away because they're not able to articulate their experience of risk, or Safe Steps, for some reason, doesn't see the risk as high enough. Whereas if we deem that the risk is a suitable referral and just put them on the wait list, then they can get support." (Amplify practitioner)

Figure 22 illustrates how the program's advocacy contributed to one client being able to access family violence emergency accommodation.

Figure 22: Practice example (Brooke)

Practice example

Brooke was referred to Amplify because of her experiences of poly-victimisation and serious risk family violence. When conducting a comprehensive risk assessment, Brooke's Amplify practitioner identified that youth refuge was not an adequately secure housing environment for Brooke.

Through continuous advocacy to a mainstream family violence service, Brooke's Amplify practitioner was able to obtain housing in a secure family violence refuge and act as a trusted service system touchpoint while Brooke transitioned to non-youth specialist accommodation.

Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

Similarly, the evaluation found that, where clients were being supported through homelessness services, the Amplify program team were able to work collaboratively with homelessness case managers to maintain a lens on family violence risk and safety considerations where young people were accessing youth refuge environments and other housing options (see Figure 23).

Figure 23: Practice example (Luka)

Practice example

In providing support to Luka, the Amplify practitioner adopted a co-case management model alongside housing his case managers, to bring a family violence lens to his housing needs. Through this process, Amplify were able to support Luka's successful application into a medium-term housing program, despite ongoing family violence risk, by providing safety plans and continued risk assessment and management.

Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

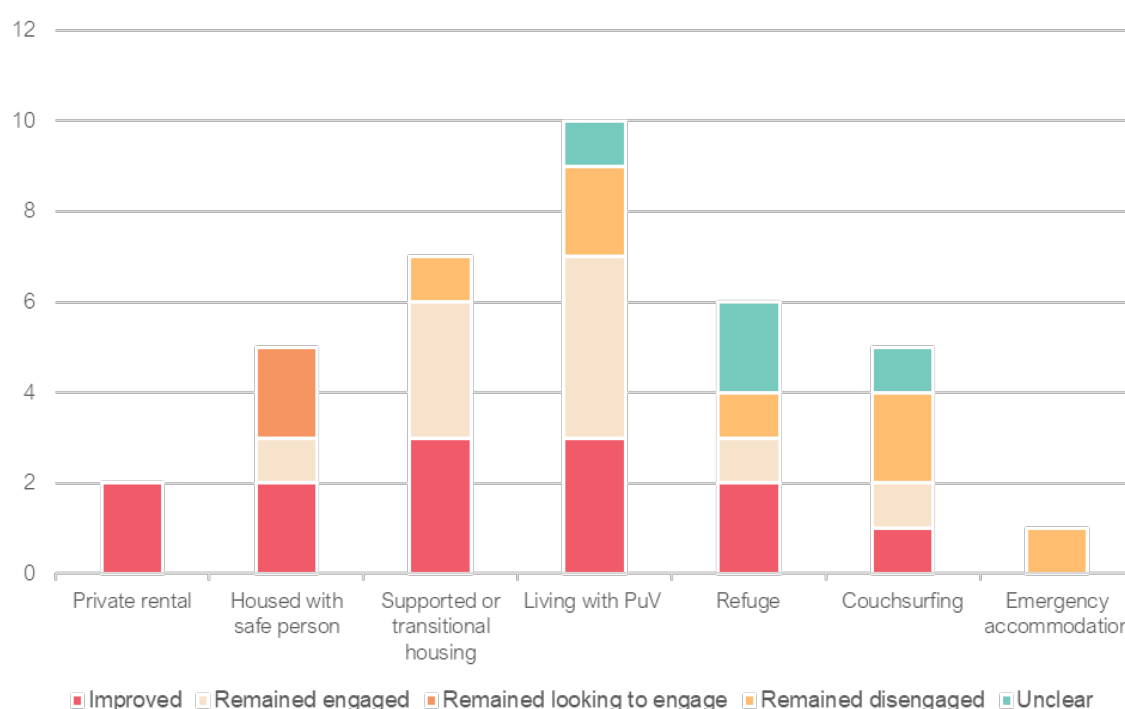
Practitioner focus groups, as well as case studies and interviews with young people also demonstrated Amplify program staff's capability and willingness to find creative solutions to young people's housing issues – particularly in finding informal solutions that might not be visible to the housing and homelessness service system. This included where young people were able to identify a safe adult friend or family member with whom they could live, and the Amplify program team were able to leverage brokerage funding to reduce the financial burden on that trusted adult.

"We've had a number of young people who've self-placed with other adults or other families to escape family violence in their family of origin, and through our brokerage we've been able to set those families up with furniture for the young people and grocery vouchers so that the families can support an extra growing adult. And ... if that hadn't been able to happen, the family probably wouldn't have been able to [house] them." (Amplify practitioner)

Other examples identified through the evaluation included an Amplify worker helping a young person to draft a lease agreement for an informal sublet and helping another young person overcome legal barriers to living with their protective parent.

Finally, it is important to note that improved outcomes in relation to education and employment – as well as the capacity of young people to maintain any engagement which pre-existed their entry into the program – appear to be linked with improvements in housing outcomes (see Figure 24).

Figure 24: Housing status at exit by education and employment outcome



Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

Analysing data from the 36 closed young people with known housing outcomes at exit, all but one of those in relatively safe, stable housing at close (i.e., private rental, housed with a safe family member or friend, or in supported or transitional housing) had either demonstrated improvements in their engagement in education and/or employment, or had been able to maintain pre-existing engagement. Conversely, half of the young people in less stable housing situations, such as couch-surfing or emergency accommodation, remained disengaged from education and employment.

Noting the relatively small sample size, these preliminary findings suggest that safe, stable accommodation is an important outcome for young people, not just in its own right, but in its capacity to enable (or act as a barrier to) young people's capacity to achieve wider goals, particularly in relation to education, employment and financial independence.

Identifying and addressing misidentification

The evaluation found that, despite not being an explicit focus of the program, the Amplify model was able to work holistically and responsively with young victim survivors who had been misidentified as the respondent on an FVIO. Case studies suggested that experiences of misidentification were particularly prominent among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, and multicultural clients, particularly those from African backgrounds.

The evaluation found that the inclusive, safe and de-stigmatising culture of the program team (see section 2.2.2.3) and the capacity of the Amplify program team to make accurate assessments of family violence risk (see section 2.2.2.1) meant that the program was able to surface experiences of misidentification; build trusting relationships; and tangibly improve safety outcomes for this cohort. This included being highly attuned to the harm caused by young people's prior negative service interactions, as well as experiences of racism and over-policing. (see Figure 25).

Figure 25: Case study (Isaac)

Case study (Isaac)

Isaac is a young Torres Strait Islander man who presented to a youth homelessness service at age 15 after his mother called police to the family home following a physical altercation that resulted in property damage. At the time, Isaac tried to tell the police that his mother had been the predominant aggressor, entering his room without permission and whipping him with her belt. Isaac had pushed his mother away from him and she fell back, breaking a window in the process. Isaac reflected that the responding police did not believe him and kept making comments about his physical size. He was subsequently listed as the respondent on an FVIO and left home that night.

Once referred into the Amplify Pilot, Isaac slowly began to disclose a significant history of physical and psychological violence from his mother. Child Protection had been involved periodically, but without any meaningful outcomes to his safety. As a result, Isaac held a lot of distrust towards services, which he felt have repeatedly let him down, or blamed him for the violence that he had experienced.

Amplify Practitioners made warm and detailed referrals to a range of services to address Isaac's needs and provided ongoing coordination to ensure consistent understanding – which helped Isaac to slowly rebuild his trust in services. Through this process, Isaac was able to connect with legal support to address his misidentification on the FVIO. Isaac was also able to access refuge accommodation before successfully entering longer-term housing. Over a period of six months, Amplify Practitioners were able to work with Isaac to increase his family violence literacy and, when he decided that he wanted to reconnect with his mother and her side of the family, provide non-judgemental safety planning and risk management.

Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

Restoring trust in the service system

Interviews with young people, as well as case studies and practitioner focus groups, indicated that engaging with the Amplify model had a therapeutic effect on young people's relationship to the service system, particularly where the young person had a long history of negative service interactions or had experienced significant system harm. This included young people's experiences of feeling disbelieved, neglected and undermined in their past service system interactions (see section 2.4.1.2).

In practice, the evaluation found that the Amplify program team were able to address experiences of system harm as part of the young person's overall risk profile, responding to risks associated with negative system interactions in a client-led and affirming way, as illustrated at Figure 26.

Figure 26: Practice example (Manal)

Practice example

Manal reported to her Amplify practitioner that she was feeling pressured and judged by her Child Protection worker and as a result did not want to meet them at her new accommodation in a refuge. Her practitioner, in collaboration with refuge staff, were able to liaise with Child Protection to meet the requirement to sight and confirm Manal's safety, without Child Protection needing to attend the refuge.

Source: Centre for Innovative Justice analysis of program data.

Noting the prevalence of these experiences across the program's client cohort, the evaluation found that engagement with the Amplify program often had an unexpected and positive impact on young people's service system engagement – both in terms of their engagement with the Amplify program itself, as well as their willingness and readiness to engage with wider services. This included multiple examples in which young people had declined mental health support at the point of program entry but then actively requested a referral at the point of program exit.

Importantly, the evaluation also found that the capacity of the Amplify program to restore trust in the service system extended beyond individual clients and actually supported help-seeking behaviours within sibling groups.

"I had one young person who had been bounced around services, and since we've been working together, they've brought their two younger siblings into the service. They were like, this is our pathway in and from this point we can access this, this, and this. Their siblings needed completely different things from what they did, but they were like, 'Okay, we'll get you in here and then you can go that way and this way'. So, they were learning as well, like, how do we get in safely? What do we need? Who can help us?" (Amplify practitioner)

The capacity of the Amplify program to repair young people's trust in the service system demonstrates how, just as a single negative service interaction can discourage future help-seeking, the experience of feeling genuinely heard, valued, and treated with dignity can build confidence and trust. Reflecting on the significant impact that the program had on their safety and capacity to move forward with their life, one young person began to cry, stating:

"I would rather get this upset because it obviously to you shows the impact. Shows how much effort [my Amplify practitioner] put in, how much they actually love their job, you know. And again, building that relationship with me of stability, of being a safe person, of helping me, I guess, guide me into, you know, adulthood." (Amplify client)

Young people going on to do their own advocacy

Finally, the evaluation found that an important unintended outcome was the ability of young people supported through the program to go on to participate in advocacy and wider lived experience work. Where this had occurred, Amplify practitioners observed the transformative nature of this outcome, particularly given the significant levels of family violence and associated risks that the Amplify client cohort were often navigating.

"We've had a couple of young people who have, like, started doing advocacy about their experiences of family violence and homelessness, which is, like, just the most incredible thing to see ... they're doing the systemic change now. I don't know, if that's not the most incredible outcome, then I don't know what is."
(Amplify practitioner)

2.3.2 Outcomes for wider services

- The delivery of formal training and secondary consultations was highly valued by wider services and contributed to increased confidence and capacity to identify and appropriately refer young people experiencing family violence – including when first presenting to homelessness services via the Frontyard access point.
- Secondary consultations are particularly valuable for services working with young people who do not fall within the program's target age range, but who would still benefit from the program's dual specialisation in family violence and developmentally appropriate practice.
- Both secondary consultations and co-case management appear to be contributing to capability uplift across mainstream service settings to work in developmentally appropriate and safe ways with children and young people. This in turn appears to be improving young people's access to key supports and entitlements.
- The inclusion of the Amplify program within MCM's suite of services meant that homelessness services were able to focus on improving housing outcomes, rather than holding complex family violence risk in the absence of a specialised response.

2.3.2.1 Services are more confident and able to identify and respond to risk

The evaluation found that the capacity building support provided by the Amplify program team has clearly increased the confidence and capability of wider MCM services to screen for and identify family violence risk for unaccompanied young people presenting to the youth homelessness system, including the Frontyard access point.

Over the pilot period, the Amplify program delivered six two-day training sessions to 128 internal staff, with a particular focus on building confidence and capability to undertake intermediate MARAM risk assessments where young people are identified as experiencing family violence.

Pre and post-surveys of training participants indicated increased understanding of the impacts of family violence on young people; increased confidence in identifying family violence; and improved recognition that understanding of family violence is an important aspect of delivering youth homelessness services. This increased confidence is further reflected in the volume of referrals flowing through to the Amplify program, including a significant increase in referrals (approximately 50 percent) following the initial delivery of training during the pilot's establishment.

The Amplify program also regularly provides secondary consults to support risk assessment and ongoing responses to young people who have experienced family violence – both to MCM programs and external services.

External practitioners who participated in formal training and/or received secondary consults consistently described increased confidence to identify and name family violence risk.

“Definitely one of the outcomes is being able to identify and name some of the behaviour as family violence when working with the young people. That has directly come out of the training that we did and the consultations that we’ve done with Amplify.” (External practitioner)

This included an improved understanding of the prevalence of experiences of family violence for young people presenting to the service system for other reasons - including homelessness, mental ill-health, alcohol and drug use, or disengagement from mainstream education – and, therefore, the need to be actively identifying and assessing family violence risk.

“Young people are not coming to [education support services] because they are going through family violence. They are just coming for some other needs and that’s where we are in a position to help them identify [family violence risk] as a need.” (External practitioner)

Practitioners also reflected that the delivery of training had provided them with a clearer understanding of their responsibilities under the MARAM framework.

“Amplify did do a really good training on supporting young people who have experienced family violence, and doing so provided some clarity on what our role is ... that's just been helpful in terms of just having a very clear direction of like, okay, this is what we do. And then with that information, make referrals if needed.”
(External practitioner)

The evaluation found that, aside from improving wider service system capacity to identify family violence risk, the capacity building support provided by the Amplify program also helped external practitioners to feel more confident when broaching conversations with young people about family violence, including in the context of case management.

“[Now I’m] able to say, “No, that is actually a form ... of family violence that you're experiencing” and then be able to talk [the young person] through that. That's because of what we've been able to do with the Amplify team. And I feel like without that, I don't know whether I would have been at a stage where I could have done this [work].” (External practitioner)

External practitioners reflected on the impact of Amplify’s training and secondary consults in improving their understanding of the family violence service system, as well as their confidence and competency in supporting clients to navigate that system to have their needs met.

“It's just given me so much more confidence to kind of talk about [family violence] in a way [where] the knowledge that I'm sharing with young people is something that can help them then navigate a system.” (External practitioner)

In some circumstances, practitioners working outside of the Amplify program observed that this capacity building support had empowered them to advocate on behalf of their clients to other services, including to facilitate their access to family violence-related supports and entitlements. In this way, the evaluation found that the program’s secondary consultation is directly contributing to improved safety outcomes for young people - particularly those falling outside the target age range for the Amplify program, but for whom mainstream family violence responses are not developmentally appropriate (including young people aged 20 to 24).

“Having that secondary consult element is huge ... A lot of the young people I work with are outside the age range, but [Amplify] still provide us with secondary consults ... And so, knowing how to work the Orange Door system to get our young people supported ... is a game-changer ... I took a young person into [The Orange Door] and I think they tried to make her retell her story four times ... but me then having that knowledge, I could push back on them and say 'no, you know, she's already told the story', and prevent that re-traumatisation of her having to repeat, repeat, repeat.” (External practitioner)

Overall, the evaluation found strong evidence that the Amplify program’s provision of capacity building support had enabled wider services to identify family violence risk and wider experiences of harm more effectively, and to respond in ways that are trauma and family violence risk-informed.

2.3.2.2 Services are able to work in a more focused way

A key finding in relation to wider service system implications for the Amplify program was the way in which Amplify’s specialist, youth-oriented family violence support enabled wider services, particularly mental health services, to work in a more focused way. Several external practitioners reflected that, before the Amplify program was established, they were often, out of necessity, made to step outside of their job description and engage in family violence work for which they did not have the capacity or were otherwise not equipped. As one practitioner working in an acute mental health service observed:

“Before we even had Amplify, [family violence] was usually that the prime determinant of their mental health ... so, without having that managed, or solved properly, we couldn't start working on any of the mental health stuff. So, [Amplify] kind of lets us do what we're meant to do, essentially.” (External practitioner)

Interestingly, this practitioner also reflected that the existence of the Amplify program meant that Amplify clients were less likely to have their mental health severely deteriorate and that there was less demand for a mental health crisis response as a result. This observation is a clear indication not only of the overlap between experiences of family violence and mental ill-health for this cohort (see section 2.4.1.1), but also the extent to which acute mental ill-health can be a response to experiences of trauma.

“While a lot of the young people within Amplify have mental health struggles, they're not coming to [mental health crisis service], because they're not getting so bad that they deteriorate, and meet our criteria ... I do find that having Amplify as that stop-gap before it gets so bad that they're having a breakdown has made a difference.” (External practitioner)

Through an interview with a school principal, the evaluation identified a similar sense of relief at the capacity of the Amplify program team to maintain a lens on family violence risk for the young people engaged in the program. Speaking about the feeling of reassurance that they experienced knowing that a student was being supported by Amplify, the principal noted:

“When you feel confident ... that that the young person you're looking after is also being looked after outside of your job, then I feel like it's easier to do the things that you need to do. Because I think we feel um, well, I certainly feel obligated all the time. These young people are vulnerable, and you want to just do everything you can to give them a better life. But you can't always do that once they leave the school grounds, but you still worry. So, it's really reassuring to know that they're being looked after.” (External practitioner)

2.3.2.3 Building knowledge around young people’s unique experiences of risk

An emerging finding of the evaluation is that co-case management could provide an opportunity for the Amplify program team to build the capacity of wider services to work appropriately and effectively with unaccompanied young people.

While this included building the knowledge of homelessness services to recognise and respond to family violence risk, it also included challenging some of the assumptions and biases held by mainstream family violence services which can otherwise prevent unaccompanied young people from accessing key supports and entitlements (see section 2.3.1.7). Noting that co-case management with family violence services has only been relevant in very limited circumstances during the evaluation period, where this is able to occur, it represents an opportunity for knowledge sharing and practice uplift across both service settings.

2.4 Learning

2.4.1 Needs and experiences of unaccompanied young people

- Unaccompanied young people present with a unique and layered risk profile that is not always well understood by current service responses. In particular, there is a systemic lack of recognition of the significant levels of risk, fear and harm experienced by young people.
- Young people often make multiple attempts at receiving support, experiencing active exclusion, dismissal or escalation of their experiences of harm.
- Housing emerged as a predominant need for young people and one which, if left unaddressed, could exacerbate their family violence risk. Despite the Amplify program achieving many positive housing outcomes for young people, a lack of appropriate and safe housing prevents many Amplify clients from achieving long-term, sustainable safety.
- The evaluation indicated that young people experience varying degrees of readiness to engage in healing and recovery work and value interventions that let them set the pace – including those which occur outside of clinical settings.

2.4.1.1 Unaccompanied young people's experiences of risk and harm

The evaluation found that young people were often experiencing several intersecting forms of severe risk, including family violence risk, mental health risk, alcohol and drug risk as well as risks associated with homelessness. The Amplify program demonstrated a unique ability to identify and respond to this nuanced risk profile, which would otherwise go unaddressed by the service system.

In particular, the evaluation surfaced the scale and imminence of violence experienced by young people, across both family of origin and intimate partner dynamics. High risk indicators were prevalent among the stories of young people captured for this report and included experiences of strangulation, sexual assault, assault with a weapon, conversion therapy and severe physical assaults leading to hospitalisations and miscarriages.

Despite the severity of harm experienced by young people, adult and mainstream service responses often failed to recognise, or adequately respond to, this risk (see section 2.4.2).

Young people's experiences of family violence also had flow on effects, causing or otherwise exacerbating their risk of homelessness and mental ill-health. Highlighting the interconnected nature of the risk experienced by young people, evaluation data consistently demonstrated how co-occurring family violence and homelessness risk can increase the isolation that is experienced by young people, in turn contributing to or otherwise exacerbating their mental ill-health.

In escaping family violence, many young people distanced themselves – both geographically and emotionally – from their families, communities and broader support networks. Many young people also experienced disruption to their education or employment, making it increasingly difficult to maintain a sense of connection and belonging. Describing this phenomenon and its impact on the young people with whom they work, an Amplify practitioner reflected:

"We live in a world that is like you're supposed to have community around you and when you lose that community, you lose so many of the tethers that hold you in normal or normative life." (Amplify practitioner)

Another consistent theme that emerged through the evaluation was the prevalence of systems harm experienced by young people. These experiences existed on a spectrum – from service interactions where young people's experiences were disbelieved or not heard, to circumstances where services had colluded with adult perpetrators and exacerbated family violence risk – and were often re-traumatising (see section 2.4.2.2). Young people and practitioners reflected that negative or harmful service interactions – particularly where these were cumulative - could erode a young person's trust in services, and in adults more broadly. In the absence of programs like Amplify, this in turn reduced help-seeking behaviour and contributed to trajectories of further harm.

2.4.1.2 Unaccompanied young people's experiences seeking support

The evaluation found that young people actively sought help from the service system for their experiences of family violence and homelessness, often bouncing between or being turned away from multiple touchpoints before being connected with the Amplify program.

Every young person engaged with the program reported prior experiences of being disbelieved or having their experiences of harm minimised. This was particularly the case where young people presented to mainstream family violence services.

"I think that young people are not recognised as victim survivors in their own right. I've certainly had some difficulty around working with a young person whose mother was using violence and the response from Orange Door was quite poor. Very poor actually. So much so that we walked out after about half an hour."
(External practitioner)

Where young people were able to have their experiences taken seriously by services, many still experienced responses that did not align with their needs. One young person described how service responses that were not helpful or reflective of their current circumstances contributed to a sense of not being genuinely cared for by the system.

"I sat with [my caseworker] and I'd be like, 'I haven't eaten in so many days because I have no fucking money to eat'. And they gave me a \$50 Woolworths voucher and dog food ... because I had a dog originally and my [abusive parent] took it ... and I was really struggling with that because that's my dog, but they gave me [dog food] knowing I didn't even have my dog anymore, you know? And they didn't even care about the fact that I was struggling."
(Program participant)

The evaluation also highlighted a lack of dedicated pathways and service responses for unaccompanied young people, resulting in them being required to navigate service systems and pathways designed for adults. These pathways tended to be characterised by poor understanding of young people's unique experiences of family violence risk and harm (section 2.4.1.1); a lack of flexibility and developmentally appropriate approaches to building and maintaining engagement (section 2.4.2.1); and a tendency to undermine young people's agency and to treat them as extensions of their parents, even in circumstances where a parent was enacting harm against the young person (section 2.4.2.2).

Amplify practitioners also described young people experiencing high levels of service activity without any meaningful intervention or change in their safety – including cycles of Child Protection opening, investigating and closing files without providing young people with the support that they needed to feel safe and seen.

In this context, the capacity of Amplify to scaffold young people's wider service interactions and walk alongside young people over time were seen as crucial steps in repairing young people's trust in the service system and beginning the process of addressing risk and working towards recovery.

2.4.1.3 Housing needs of young people

Consistent with the broader evidence base, the evaluation identified significant overlap between young people's experiences of family violence and homelessness. Reinforced by the co-location of the Amplify program within a youth homelessness service, as well as the program's eligibility criteria, the evaluation found that all young people engaged in the program initially presented with support needs related to housing.

Across the cohort engaged in the program, young people experienced varying levels of housing instability or homelessness, ranging from street-based homelessness and couch-surfing, to impending evictions or VCAT proceedings. Some young people were preparing to leave situations of violence, while others remained in or had returned to the home where violence was occurring. A small number of young people had found housing but required ongoing support to formalise these placements with Child Protection or to address their broader support and safety needs to ensure that they remained sustainable.

Consistent with wider evidence, the evaluation encountered a considerable gap in suitable accommodation in terms of both the quantity and nature of available housing options. The evaluation found that young people were consistently presenting with diverse and unique housing needs that were not able to be met. As described by one Amplify practitioner, the options available through both the homelessness system and the wider housing market are not currently able to respond flexibly to the individual needs of young people.

“There is no suitable housing. It is so frustrating, like, even the suitable housing isn't suitable. Either they're in a youth refuge [where] they have to come and go within certain times and the workers always have to know where they are ... Family violence refuge also sucks because they might be, like, a 17-year-old young woman, who's then here with all these like families ... Otherwise, they're in a private rental and paying 95 percent of their Centrelink on their rent ... Or they're in a transitional housing model where they're alone, not getting any support.” (Amplify practitioner)

The Amplify program was able to work in a coordinated way with homelessness case managers to improve young people's housing outcomes. Despite this the absence of appropriate accommodation and housing options for young people broadly, but particularly for young people experiencing family violence, repeatedly stymied the program team's capacity to improve safety. The program team described young people remaining in unsafe situations, experiencing family violence across multiple relationships or simply taking on different forms of risk.

“We see young people leaving and then having the risk of rough sleeping, which is just really dangerous. And lots of the young women that we work with who are rough sleeping, they're unsafe from every angle ... Unsafe from other young people who are sleeping rough, unsafe from the family that they may have to go back to, and then other things [such as] risks related to drug use ...” (Amplify practitioner)

While programs such as Amplify can therefore make demonstrable and meaningful improvements to young people's safety and family violence risk, they must be accompanied by significant, purposeful investment in youth-specific, affordable housing and accommodation options.

2.4.1.4 Recovery and healing needs of young people

The evaluation found a significant gap in the current service system's capacity to respond meaningfully to young people's healing and recovery needs. This was both in terms of the availability of appropriate services and the ability to move beyond crisis responses and towards longer-term therapeutic support.

Despite this gap, Amplify clients demonstrated capacity to begin to heal and recover from their experiences of family violence outside of clinical settings. Interviews, case studies and focus groups revealed that being listened to, believed and validated was the first, and perhaps most important, step in young people's healing and recovery journeys. In this way, the Amplify program was able to create opportunities for young people to build their readiness to step into a therapeutic relationship, either with their Amplify practitioner or through more formal mental health and counselling services.

The evaluation also found that the healing outcomes of young people were improved when they were empowered to progress at their own pace. Amplify clients demonstrated varying levels of readiness to engage with therapeutic activities and this could quickly change in line with their personal circumstances or living situation. Accordingly, the evaluation identified the importance of embedding opportunities for therapeutic support within broader approaches to program delivery, enabling young people to tap into, and sometimes out of, healing and recovery work as needed.

These findings suggest that, while there is a need to establish more formal service pathways for youth-specific trauma recovery and healing, it is also necessary to embed healing-oriented practices in all family violence responses for young people, including those like the Amplify program which are delivered at crisis point.

2.4.2 Wider system responses to unaccompanied young people

- Unaccompanied young people are often required to engage with a patchwork of services to have their needs addressed, with no single sector being accountable for responding to the safety and wellbeing of this cohort.
- Unaccompanied young people are often met with adult-centric service responses that are not well-placed to work with young people in developmentally appropriate ways, and which frequently exit or exclude young people without meaningfully addressing their support needs – including by requiring parental consent as a precondition of support.
- Ongoing family violence risk also often precludes young people from accessing critical supports, including housing – with the program's advocacy to wider services (and associated safety planning) emerging as key to addressing this issue.
- The Amplify program surfaced the myriad ways in which young people are particularly vulnerable to systems harm and abuse, including where services enable adult perpetrators to gatekeep young people's access to key services and entitlements.

2.4.2.1 System responses are not working for young people

The evaluation found that current system responses are unable to respond appropriately to the needs of unaccompanied young people. Siloing between service systems, narrow conceptualisations of family violence risk and a lack of understanding or confidence to work with young people all contribute to this cohort falling through the gaps.

For young people to receive meaningful support around their experiences of family violence, the evaluation found that they first needed to have these experiences recognised and understood by the system. Young people themselves, as well Amplify practitioners and external practitioners, reflected that there is poor understanding and recognition across the system of what family violence risk looks like for young people. Practitioners reflected that this was especially true for certain cohorts of young people, such as boys and young men, several of whom had been turned away from The Orange Door despite presenting as victim survivors.

"I've taken a lot of young people to Orange Door, and it's horrendous. Quite often causes more harm. In terms of our young men, who get rejected, and they're victim survivors themselves, but because they're male, they're discriminated against." (External practitioner)

Eligibility criteria and issues around consent also emerged as a significant barrier to young people accessing support – as well as creating opportunities for adult perpetrators to 'gate-keep' or otherwise inflict further harm on young people (see section 2.4.2.2). The evaluation found a lack of confidence among mainstream practitioners to find creative solutions to these barriers, and a lack of clear direction at the organisational level to ensure that consent can be sought safely.

The evaluation also identified a lack of clarity around the role of Child Protection, which meant that young people were not receiving support from services because of an incorrect assumption that Child Protection workers would be holding this risk. While the current system response assumes that Child Protection have responsibility for young people under the age of 18, and particularly those 16 and under, Amplify practitioners and external practitioners regularly described Child Protection declining to intervene with clients as young as 15, or failing to intervene in a way that meaningfully addressed risk and safety.

Where young people were able to get a foot into the service system, often after repeated attempts and retelling of their story, the evaluation identified that they were often met with developmentally inappropriate responses. A frequent example raised throughout the evaluation was the phenomenon of mainstream family violence services and other supports 'closing' young people's case management files prematurely because young people were not immediately responsive to calls and emails (or did not immediately disclose their experiences of violence and harm).

As a result of these cumulative factors, the evaluation found that young people are often left to manage significant family violence risk (often accompanied by other risks associated with homelessness, mental ill-health and addiction) with no support, or are otherwise funnelled into other service systems without the capacity to respond to their family violence risk and associated needs.

2.4.2.2 System responses that contribute to and compound harm

A key learning arising from the delivery of the Amplify program is the frequency and scale of system harm experienced by young people. Interviews, case studies and practitioner focus groups revealed the many ways in which the system can contribute to or compound harm, including by minimising or dismissing the disclosures shared by young people or by actively colluding with adult perpetrators.

The evaluation found that the risk averse nature of many service organisations and systems was a key driver of system harm. Instead of holding risk alongside the young person, whether family violence, mental health or AOD risk, many services enacted exclusionary eligibility criteria that left the young person to hold risk alone. Exemplifying this, an Amplify practitioner described how ongoing family violence risk can often preclude young people from accessing housing support, despite the fact that failing to respond to a young person's housing needs can escalate their family violence risk and increase other forms of risk associated with homelessness.

"Family violence can prevent people from being in refuge or in other short-to-medium-term housing outcomes. And the refuges will say, 'You know, the family violence risk is too high. And it's like, 'So, you're going to make that person homeless instead of housing them? Which is going to be the thing that is going to be able to prevent the family violence in the future.' But because the organisation doesn't want to be liable for whatever may happen within that violent relationship, then the young person is made homeless. And that's something we've seen on a number of occasions. It's not isolated.'" (Amplify practitioner)

In another stark example, a practitioner recounted the story of one young person who was abruptly exited from their accommodation after the person using violence committed an assault against them on the housing grounds. Responses such as this fail to recognise the impacts of ongoing coercion experienced by young people, ultimately punishing them for their continued experiences of psychological and physical violence.

"This young person [is] being exited from supported housing programs because she has been assaulted on the grounds. I understand ... that risk is scary, but it's just like, the lack of care, even in the way that they did that, like not explaining boundaries to young people, not explaining which rules have a three-strike rule, and which rules are immediate exit. It just creates this feeling in the young person that they are being punished for something that has happened to them." (Amplify practitioner)

The evaluation also emphasised the particular vulnerabilities experienced by young people, who often possess less social capital than their adult counterparts. In some instances, this resulted in services defaulting to positioning a young person's parents or caregivers as the authority, even if they were using violence. This actively escalated both the level of risk and feelings of fear experienced by the young person.

"We've had experiences of refuge workers calling violent parents. I've had refuge workers threaten a young person that they'll have to return to the violent parent's home if they don't engage with these really strict requirements of the refuge.

Threatening to bring the parent into the refuge. So, like, an absolute lack of understanding of the severity of violence that can be caused by people's parents."

(Amplify practitioner)

Similarly, the evaluation highlighted how legal and service systems can be weaponised by adult perpetrators to cause further harm to the young person.

"The systems abuse is always so huge. The misidentification on intervention orders, the use of the Child Protection system, and the use of the community services system, [such as] parents trying to get a young person to attend family mediation or family therapy as a way of continuing their violence. Some really interesting forms of violence that I have seen recently that I'd never seen before was, like, a parent forcing a young person to go on anti-depressants that were not prescribed to them. It's like a form of chemical coercion, that the young person didn't really feel like they could say no to, because they thought that that's what they needed to be okay in the world." (Amplify practitioner)

Amplify practitioners described how requirements to seek parental consent in order to access key entitlements or services often provided opportunities for adult perpetrators to prevent young people from accessing the supports that they needed. This included, for example, Centrelink's 'unreasonable to live at home' designation – which often involved Centrelink staff seeking to verify through an adult perpetrator that a young person is unsafe at home, leading to systems abuse and increased family violence risk.

"[We see] parents precluding young people from accessing Centrelink by speaking to their Centrelink social workers and saying that it is safe and reasonable for the young person to be at home ... I actually wrote down a really good quote, yesterday, that was that Centrelink, 'haven't been able to verify that the violence [is] happening because they had to hear voices that aren't just the young person's voice and they need to include all viewpoints in their assessments'. Which is just, like, you would just never say that to an adult who's experiencing family violence." (Amplify practitioner)

On balance, the evaluation found that current service system responses often fail to account for the unique forms of risk that are faced by unaccompanied young people. In many cases, the lack of developmentally appropriate service responses for this cohort meant that many young people were presenting to the Amplify program with a history of significant systemic trauma and a lack of trust in the service system as a result.

3 Future directions for the Amplify Program

This section sets out recommendations to scale up the Amplify Program moving forward, while maintaining and strengthening those elements that the evaluation found to be central to the program's capacity to improve outcomes for unaccompanied young people.

3.1 Recommendations

1. Continue and expand funding of the Amplify program.

The evaluation findings demonstrate clear need for the Amplify Program and evidence that the program is contributing to positive outcomes for unaccompanied young people. Ongoing funding should be provided both to continue and expand program delivery.

2. Review the Amplify program's resourcing model to better reflect the program's scope, including both service delivery and capacity building elements of the model.

The evaluation findings indicate that current program resourcing is not sufficient to deliver on the intended scope and promise of the model. Resourcing should therefore be reviewed, including in light of any expansion to the program scope and eligibility, to ensure program sustainability.

3. Extend program timeframes from four months to a minimum of six months, with capacity to provide step-down support up to one-year where required.

Initial program timeframes are not reflective of the need to sequence interventions when working with young people in crisis or of the timeframes associated with accessing key supports and/or achieving housing outcomes. Timeframes and associated resourcing should therefore be adjusted to enhance the program's capacity to achieve positive outcomes, including to support young people to work towards recovery and healing.

4. Consider expanding the Amplify program age range, including to work with young people up to and including (at minimum) 21 years of age.

The evaluation findings identified clear benefits for young people outside of the current age range being able to access the Amplify program. This is particularly young people they are already receiving support via MCM's refuges and housing and homelessness services but have unaddressed family violence and safety needs and where they require additional scaffolding and support to engage with a family violence service response. It is therefore recommended to expand the program's age range (and associated resourcing), either in whole or where specific additional criteria are met, to align with the age range of young people presenting to Frontyard (noting that the age range is 16 – 25 but that children and young people as young as 12 years do present).

5. Ensure that any future funding for the Amplify program includes dedicated resourcing for clinical supervision and reflective practice, complemented by strong partnerships with specialist family violence services.

The evaluation emphasised the need for specialist supervision and support arrangements for Amplify practitioners to ensure that they are adequately supported to manage high-risk cases and continually develop their family violence knowledge and practice. Similarly, formal partnerships with specialist family violence services can provide formal and informal learning and development opportunities for program staff.

6. Incorporate dedicated, crisis brokerage to address material support needs of Amplify clients, including where they have not yet been able to access flexible support packages and other key entitlements.

This includes brokerage funding to address immediate, material support needs while a young person is in crisis and before flexible support packages and other key entitlements have been accessed. Brokerage can also address barriers to program engagement, such as providing phones, data and/or internet access.

7. Work with Family Safety Victoria to identify and address barriers to timely information sharing by the Amplify program.

The evaluation findings suggest that the Amplify program's capacity to assess and manage risk is undermined where it does not have access to the same level of timely and comprehensive information sharing as other specialist family violence services. As such, any expansion of the program should be accompanied by improved access to family violence risk information, in line with the information sharing capacity of specialist family violence services.

8. Actively monitor the capacity of the Amplify program to work in culturally safe and responsive ways with First Nations young people and young people from culturally and racially marginalised communities.

Noting that the evaluation found that the program is currently able to respond well to the needs of specific cohorts and to work in culturally responsive ways, this should be actively monitored and any gaps in practice addressed accordingly. This includes through the establishment of Practice Lead roles and/or formal partnerships with community-specific services.

4 Conclusion

Overall, the evaluation has identified a **clear need** for the Amplify program, with few (if any) appropriate service pathways available to unaccompanied young people presenting in Victoria because of their interrelated experiences of family violence and homelessness. Instead, the evaluation identified multiple examples of service exclusion, young people having their experiences of family violence risk and harm minimised or ignored, and system responses actively escalating family violence risk for young people. This includes by defaulting to the young person's parent as a source of information, authority and consent, even where that parent had been identified by the young person as unsafe.

The evaluation also found that the design and operationalisation of the Amplify program **responds to that need**. Overall, the program was found to deliver an integrated family violence and youth homelessness response successfully that reflects where and why unaccompanied young people typically present to the service system – that is, because they want support to access safe accommodation and housing. At the same time the program was found to be able to maintain a crucial lens on family violence risk, as well as the ways in which young people have been impacted by their experiences of family violence.

Crucially, the program was characterised by a culture of **inclusive and de-stigmatising practice**, as well as a strong focus on promoting young people's agency, emphasising their strengths and building protective factors in their lives.

The evaluation found that the program is **consistently achieving intended outcomes**, including that young people have their experiences validated; are able to make sense of their experiences; and are actively supported to enhance protective and stabilising factors in their lives. The evaluation found **meaningful improvements in safety**, as well as improved housing outcomes for many young people.

The evaluation also identified clear **future directions for expanding the model** – with the first step being to ensure that the program is funded on a continuing basis to ensure that it can continue to address critical gaps in the existing service system's capacity to respond to unaccompanied young people. The evaluation also pointed to a need for increased resourcing; expanded program timeframes and eligibility criteria; as well as a formalised interface with The Orange Door and Child Protection to ensure that the Amplify program has access to timely, comprehensive risk information and can more easily participate in coordinated, multiagency risk assessment and management.

Finally, the CIJ wish to acknowledge the strong **commitment to seeing, hearing and empowering unaccompanied young people** across the Amplify program and MCM more broadly. This commitment was demonstrated across all aspects of program design and implementation, but particularly in the program staff's consistent efforts to work alongside young people to overcome the entrenched and systemic barriers which too often prevent unaccompanied young people from accessing shelter and safety.

Appendix A: Amplify Theory of Change

Figure 27: Amplify Program Theory of Change

Goal	The Victorian service system has increased knowledge of and capacity to respond to the specific needs of unaccompanied young people experiencing serious family violence risk										
End-of-program outcomes	Unaccompanied young people are visible to the service system	Young person is supported to plan and make decisions about what they want to have happen next		Young person has increased confidence and capacity to manage their safety and support needs moving forward		Young person is able to move forward with a sense of hope and confidence for a future free from violence		The service system maintains a lens on the young person's safety and wellbeing		Amplify pilot contributes to the evidence base on 'what works'	
Intermediate outcomes	Young people experiencing serious family violence risk are engaged with specialist support	Young person feels heard and validated	Young person feels less overwhelmed and able to reflect on next steps	Young person feels increasingly able to share and make sense of their experience(s)	Young person feels confident to seek help from services and other trusted adults	Young person is supported to enhance protective and stabilising factors in their life	Young person feels that it is possible to move forward, heal & recover	Young person feels supported to continue to implement their safety plan and goals	Wider practitioners have increased confidence to identify and/or respond to family violence risk	Model is adapted and consolidated based on emerging evidence	
Short-term outcomes	Young people experiencing serious family violence risk are identified	Young person's individual risk and safety goals are understood	Where possible, immediate risk to safety is managed	Young person has increased capacity to recognise their experience(s) as family violence	Young person understands what types of support and assistance are available to them	Young person's engagement with relevant services is actively scaffolded	Young person has a trusted role model & source of encouragement	When ready, young person's care is handed over to an appropriate, non-specialist support option	Wider practitioners have increased understanding of the nature and dynamics of family violence	Data on key activities and outcomes is collected and shared	
Influencing activities	Screen unaccompanied MCM clients for serious family violence risk (using MARAM)	Conduct risk assessments and safety planning, inc. through information sharing	Respond to immediate safety needs, inc. exploring options for rapid re-housing	Provide information and education about behaviours which constitute family violence	Provide information about supports and entitlements available to the young person	Provide case coordination, advocacy and warm referrals to relevant services	Connect young person with a Peer Support Worker	Based on readiness, plan for a safe, supported transition from the program	Provide secondary consultations and capacity-building to practitioners engaging with unaccompanied young people	Establish processes for monitoring, learning and continuous improvement	
Foundational activities	Develop detailed operating model		Recruit & on-board specialist and peer support staff		Understand client consent and reporting responsibilities		Establish and implement clear referral processes		Embed cultural safety and inclusion		Develop Monitoring & Evaluation Framework

Source: Centre for Innovative Justice in collaboration with Amplify program leadership and wider MCM stakeholders.

End Notes

- ⁱ Crime Statistics Agency, State of Victoria, 'Family Incidents' (Published June 2025) <<https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/crime-statistics/latest-victorian-crime-data/family-incidents-2>>.
- ⁱⁱ 'Children and Young People', *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare* (24 November 2023) <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/population-groups/children-and-young-people>>; Shorna Moore, 'Couch Surfing Limbo: Legal, Policy and Service Gaps Affecting Young Couch Surfers and Couch Providers in Melbourne's
- ⁱⁱⁱ Silke Meyer, Maria Atienzar-Prieto, Kate Fitz-Gibbon and Shorna Moore *Missing Figures: The Role of Domestic and Family Violence in Youth Suicide - Current State of Knowledge Report* (Griffith University, March 2023)
- ^{iv} Monica Campo, *Children's Exposure to Domestic and Family Violence: Key Issues and Responses* (Report, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Child Family Community Australia, 9 December 2015) ('*Children's Exposure to Domestic and Family Violence*').
- ^v See reference *ii*, 'Children and Young People' (AIHW).
- ^{vi} MCM and Social Ventures Australia 'MCM's Victorian Youth Homelessness Snapshot 2024' (2024).
- ^{vii} State of Victoria, *Royal Commission into Family Violence: Responses to Children and Young People Experiencing Family Violence* (Parl Paper No 132, 2016) 102, <<https://rcfv.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/MediaLibraries/RCFamilyViolence/Reports/Final/RCFV-Summary.pdf>>.
- ^{viii} Ibid 142–148.
- ^{ix} Victorian Government, 'Children and Young People' (19 April 2021) <<https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-reform-rolling-action-plan-2020-2023/children-and-young-people>>.
- ^x Elena Campbell, Todd Fernando, Leigh Gassner, Jess Hill, Zac Seidler and Anne Summers, *Unlocking the Prevention Potential: Accelerating action to end domestic, family and sexual violence* Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Commonwealth of Australia (2024) <<https://www.pmc.gov.au/resources/unlocking-the-prevention-potential>>.
- ^{xi} Tanya Corrie and Shorna Moore *Amplify: Turning up the volume on young people and family violence* (Victoria) (Melbourne City Mission, 2021) <<https://apo.org.au/node/315414>>.
- ^{xii} Ibid, 11.
- ^{xiii} Ibid, 11.
- ^{xiv} Ibid, 8 – 9.
- ^{xv} Ibid, 9.