



Enabling Workforces and Organisations **for Thriving Kids**



IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR CHILD AND YOUTH WORKFORCES

Embedding neuro-informed evidence into practice

AUGUST 2025



Thriving Queensland
Kids Partnership
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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands upon which we live and work, and their continuing connection to land and sea, kin, culture and community. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and to First Nations colleagues.

We are privileged to welcome and grow our children and support our families in these places.

We also acknowledge the First Nations leaders, advocates and organisations that have fought for children and their families, and the resulting consequences of adversity and trauma over generations.

We acknowledge the resilience, determination, leadership, generosity and innovation of First Nations peoples, and we recognise the value inherent in Indigenous ways of 'knowing, being and doing'.

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1 | Acknowledgements

Recognition of First Nations peoples

We respectfully acknowledge the First Nations Traditional Owners and Elders of the lands and seas on which we meet, live, learn and work. We acknowledge those of the past, who have passed on their wisdom and whose strength has nurtured this land. We acknowledge those of the present for their leadership and ongoing efforts to protect and promote First Nations people and cultures. We recognise that it is our collective effort and responsibility as individuals, communities, organisations and governments to ensure equality, recognition and advancement of First Nations Queenslanders across all aspects of society and everyday life. We walk together in our shared journey of reconciliation.

Recognition of lived experience

We acknowledge the individual and collective contributions of Queenslanders with lived experiences of mental ill-health and problematic alcohol and other drug use, and people, groups and communities impacted by suicidal distress or suicide. We acknowledge families, carers and support people who play a fundamental role in supporting people with lived experience. Each person's journey is unique and collectively provides a valuable contribution to reform. We acknowledge and value your expertise.

Recognition of collective collaboration

Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership (TQKP) would like to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of our collaborators including Emerging Minds, Yiliyapinya Indigenous Corporation, the Queensland Brain Institute at The University of Queensland and Dovetail - as part of Insight to the initiative for this initial phase. We would also like to acknowledge the invaluable support, and funding, from the Queensland Mental Health Commission (QMHC) and extend our thanks to all stakeholders across a range of roles and organisations. We give our thanks and appreciation for the time, knowledge and resources shared to bring together these important insights.



Suggested citation

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Leveraging resources of TQKP's philanthropic and other partners.

2 | The foundations of our approach

2.1 Purpose and getting started

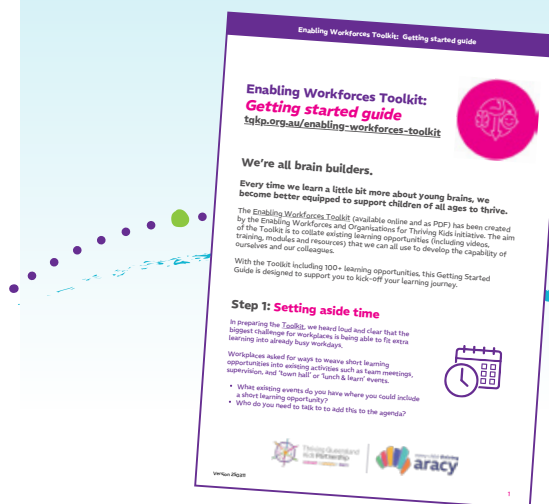
This guide has been created as part of the [Enabling Workforces and Organisations for Thriving Kids](#) initiative to assist organisations to make active efforts towards embedding neuro-informed capabilities into their work environment. In doing so, we can strengthen the support we provide to children, young people and their families. The guide is designed to be used in conjunction with the [Enabling Workforces Toolkit](#).

The evidence that informs this guide emerges from decades of research undertaken internationally by the science community, those with lived and living experience. It is focused on children's development, early intervention, mental health, wellbeing and healing.

The Implementation Guide for Child and Youth Workforces is for organisations, teams and leaders wanting to embed neuro-informed capabilities and work towards embedding a cohesive approach which supports a common language across teams, and across sectors.

For more information please contact [**TQKP@aracy.org.au**](mailto:TQKP@aracy.org.au)

The Enabling Workforces **Getting Started Guide** provides a short overview of an approach for child and youth workforces to embed neuro-informed capability building into teams and workplaces.



2.2 A case for change: Building neuro-informed capabilities

Implementation starts with building knowledge, understanding and commitment with leadership and organisational enablers. This enables leaders to apply the principles of neuroscience with a focus on quality improvement across the organisation.

Being neuro-informed simply means understanding how the brain works. It includes:

- knowledge about brain development, neuroplasticity (how the brain can change) and neurodiversity (how brains can be different)
- understanding the impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), stress effects and trauma on the brain and body
- being aware of the role of protective factors and prevention strategies in supporting holistic wellbeing, resilience and healing.

Neuro-informed capabilities consider the:

- importance of positive relationships
- cultural knowledge
- ecology of the child, family and cultural connections
- support that surrounds the child in the context of family, kin and community
- skills, attributes and beliefs that individuals require to thrive – children, young people and their families, and the workforces that support them.

2.3 Why this is important?

Being neuro-informed assists professionals in understanding and connecting, resulting in more consistent, effective support and better outcomes for children and families. Workplaces that operate in neuro-informed ways also support worker wellbeing; these capabilities affect all of us.

Service leaders have identified complex challenges across their operating environments. Many staff provide support in demanding roles and settings. The Enabling Workforces Toolkit aims to give leaders and workers across all sectors and disciplines access to neuro-informed, high-quality, and easy-to-use learning and development resources. These tools support conversations, reflection, planning, and workforce development to guide a systems approach to ongoing quality improvement, better meeting the needs of Queenslanders and beyond.

“

The earlier we intervene in life, in distress and in the onset of illness, the chances for better recovery are much greater. If we give children the best start in life, they will grow into happier healthier adults.






Professor
Helen Milroy

”



3 | Neuro-informed capability strands

Five neuro-informed capability strands have been utilised to underpin The Enabling Workforces Toolkit:

 Brain Development & Brain Health	 Adverse & Protective Childhood Experiences	 Trauma & Healing	 Resilience	 The Whole Person
Process of brain development, sensitive periods, neuroplasticity, neurodiversity, individual difference, mental health, brain health	ACES, stress effects on brain and body, protective factors	Trauma and the brain and body, healing	Resilience scale, our role in resilience, the importance of positive relationships and support	Ecology of the child and community around the child, wellbeing, cultural knowledge

The five capability strands are interrelated and collectively they invite us to think about what is possible to support Queensland children, young people, families and the workforces who support them to thrive.

Further information about the research underpinning these capability strands can be found here:

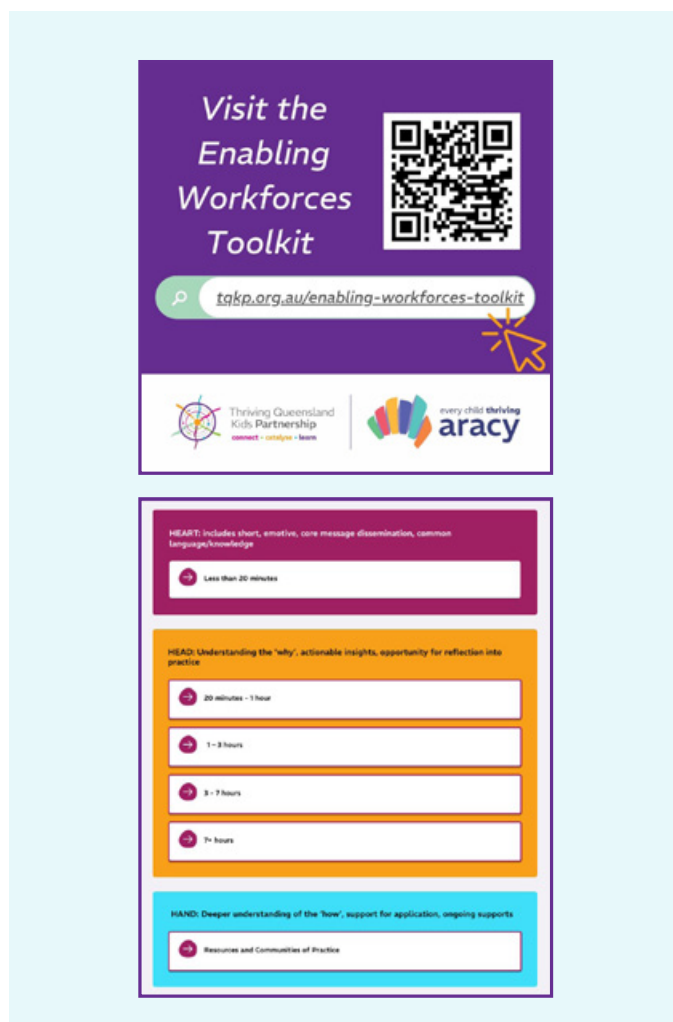
- **Neuro-informed Policy and Practice Framework**
- **Evidence Brief: Neuro-informed Policy and Practice Scoping Review**
- **Brain Building Workforces**

The aim is that by underpinning the **Enabling Workforces Toolkit** with five evidence-based capability strands, collective understanding, shared language and collaborative practices will be enabled.

How the resources within the Toolkit are utilised can be adapted to suit the needs of the context.

Section 8 provides some case study examples of application across sectors and organisations.

Appendix 1 provides a definition for the five capability strands.



Visit the Enabling Workforces Toolkit

tqkp.org.au/enabling-workforces-toolkit

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HEART: Includes short, emotive, core message dissemination, common language/knowledge

Less than 20 minutes

HEAD: Understanding the 'why', actionable insights, opportunity for reflection into practice

20 minutes - 1 hour

1-3 hours

3-7 hours

7+ hours

HAND: Deeper understanding of the 'how', support for application, ongoing supports

Resources and Communities of Practice

4 Using the Enabling Workforces Toolkit to build capability

4.1 How to use the Enabling Workforces Toolkit

Australia, along with many other countries, already offers a wide range of high-quality, engaging resources for those working with children, young people, and families. The [Enabling Workforces Toolkit](#) helps ensure every worker, in every community, can easily access over 100 curated learning opportunities tailored to their needs.

To support this, the Toolkit includes free or low-cost resources aligned with each neuro-informed capability strand. These are tiered by time and effort required, allowing users to choose a starting point or strand most relevant to their organisation, department, or service.

The interrelated capability strands encourage a collective approach to support Queensland's children, young people, families, and the workforces that serve them.



The gap between what we know and what we do is greater than the gap between what we know and what we don't know!

**Emeritus Professor
Dorothy Scott**



Getting started

To assist with practical implementation, considering time, staff wellbeing, capacity, and competing priorities, resources are organised by:

- **length** of video/module or training (starting with just a few minutes)
- **intended impact:**



Heart: includes short, emotive, core message dissemination, common language/knowledge,



Head: includes understanding the 'why', actionable insights, opportunity for reflection into practice, and



Hand: includes deeper understanding of the 'how', and ongoing supports.

When considering building workforce capability, we need to consider existing capacity, time and priorities. With this in mind, we suggest in the first instance you choose from the Heart resources.

The [Enabling Workforces Toolkit](#) is designed to be a learning asset that expands as new evidence becomes available and as new resources are created. So that moving forward we are:

- continuing to talk to workers about gaps and opportunities
- continuing to talk to organisations about other resources that can be added to the toolkit
- trialling and testing integration of the tiered resources and capability strands into existing frameworks and capability building offerings.

Adult learning principles underpin the design of the Toolkit, for example, it is designed to enable self-motivated/directing when users see the value and the relevance to their role and their team requirements. It offers an autonomous and sufficiently flexible approach for both individual workers and organisations to access.¹

¹ [Adult learning principles - Adult Learning Australia \(ala.asn.au\)](#)



5 | Exploring readiness and planning for implementation



To maximise engagement with learning, it is necessary to ensure readiness of both people and environment. Consider the authorising environment, leadership commitment, funding, time, resources, political and community influence, policies, practices, relationships, mindsets, attitudes, and beliefs.

Some key questions to ask include:

- Does the leadership team understand neuro-informed capability and see its relationship to their organisation's strategic aims?
- Do the leadership team contribute to an authorising environment in which neuro-informed capability building is believed to achieve desired outcomes?
- Is there support from decision-makers for engaging with the Toolkit and adopting applied neuroscience through quality improvement?
- What internal relationships and dynamics might influence building neuro-informed capabilities? Can these relationships be garnered to explore the possibilities?
- Can time be committed to commence planning for increasing neuro-informed understanding?

If the answer to the above questions demonstrates there is interest or at least curiosity about how this approach could build neuro-informed capabilities, then moving to set up a team to lead the process is the next step.

Implementation isn't a single event and often involves distinct stages¹. There are a range of implementation models available, and departments and organisations often have existing models in place. Using the stages from implementation science can help to support capability building using The Enabling Workforces Toolkit.

Below is an example of an implementation stages framework.



Explore - understand the setting and assess alignment with existing values, practices, policies, processes. Perhaps ask what the intention is of using The Enabling Workforces Toolkit and working to embed neuro-informed capabilities into the organisation/department/team.



Prepare – the environment. Having identified priorities, planning with leadership and a change team (see Section 6). When is the right time and at what pace? Who needs to be involved and to what degree and how? What is our realistic expectation, desired outcome? How will the Toolkit be used? Which resources are the priorities to be shared and why?



Deliver – integrate the Toolkit resources into capability building. Note, as these tiered resources are designed to be integrated rather than a one-off professional development session, delivery will look different for different organisations. For examples of delivery in practice, see Section 7 for examples of what delivery may look like.



Reflect – how does this align with our core business? How does it relate to our practice? Identify next steps.²

The Emerging Minds **Focus Quality Improvement Tool** can be used to support this process with the Enabling Workforces Toolkit. See Appendix 2 for more information.

2 Putting Evidence to Work: A School's Guide to Implementation by E4L (2019, p. 8), licensed under a CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 licence. Referenced in Using a Staged Approach to Implementation (Australian Education Research Organisation), August 2024

1 Albers & Pattuwage, 2017; Education Endowment Foundation [EEF], 2019; Meyers et al., 2012; Saldana et al., 2012

6 | Implementation



6.1 Determining priorities

Acknowledging that across sectors and roles, workload is often high and recruitment and retention are key priorities. Identifying which of the capability strands to begin with is an important aspect for teams to consider.

As a starting point, and in recognition of existing workforce capacity and time pressures, we suggest in the first instance you choose from the **Heart resources**. An investment of an hour will give you and your change team a chance to view the short form clips.



6.2 Establishing a change team

A key strategy for increasing the likelihood of uptake is nominating a facilitator and a group of people as enablers (or champions) to form a change team. Enablers are those individuals who are genuinely enthusiastic about the topic or project and can take on the role of a champion within the change team.

A change team is a group of champions within your organisation who engage with and socialise the Toolkit. Members of the change team have the capacity and are given the time to take an active role in the change process.

The change team is most effective when members represent the full diversity of experience, areas of work and perspectives across your organisation.

The change team needs to be committed to developing neuro-informed knowledge and support a systems approach to sustain learning and development towards neuro-informed capabilities within and across the organisation.





It is worth noting that members of the change team don't all have to be experts in neuro-informed capability and practices. More importantly, they need to see the value and are able to bring skills for communication and implementation.

Identify and bring a team of potential champions together to form your change team.

6.3 Implementation using the Toolkit

The Toolkit has been designed to be used flexibly and adapted to the needs of the workforce.

An approach that could be used is outlined below.

Stage	Overview	Consider
 Explore	<p>Identify the purpose for engaging with neuro-informed capabilities</p> <p>Bring together your Change Team and look through the Toolkit Heart resources. Identify:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How could this fit into existing team meetings/structures? Which of the Capability Strands your data suggests would be most aligned to begin with (for example 'Resilience'). <p>The Enabling Workforces Getting Started Guide provides further guidance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is your intention? Which of the five Capability Strands do you want to focus on first? Where could this fit into existing team meetings, lunch and learns or supervision structures?
 Prepare	<p>Bring together the broader team and explain the purpose – why your team/organisation is developing neuro-informed capabilities</p> <p>Explain how the resources will be explored together (see example below)</p> <p>Answer any questions and identify any additional support needed</p> <p>Identify when you will share the resources</p> <p>Hint: Use existing team meetings. Team huddles, lunch and learns. This enables shared learning to happen by the team and will enable ease of integration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the readiness for the implementation by your team? What else may be needed? Which of the Capability Strands will you begin with? Do you have data to support this decision? If not, consider collecting data to identify consensus from the team where to start.
 Implement	<p>During your team meeting, watch a video from the Heart section of the Toolkit</p> <p>After the video, pause and discuss with the team. Example discussion points could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is our current understanding of this concept? How does it apply to our practice? Is this different across the organisation? Are the key messages considered in our organisational policy, design and delivery? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If so, how? Is this different across the organisation? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can this be improved? What would support this? <p>Brainstorm ideas.</p> <p>Continue to share a different resource each week and continue the reflective discussions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What reflection questions will be most relevant for your team? Could members from the Change Team design specific questions? Or take it in turns to host the reflective discussion.
 Reflect	<p>When you have watched a number of the resources, consider as a team how you could</p> <p>Develop: An action plan to map the process to support a shared understanding within and across the organisation</p> <p>Include consideration of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assess - the steps, timelines, resources prepare - decide on which resources and in what format deliver - deliver learning within team reflect - review regularly finalise with leadership endorsement review regularly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What have you learnt? Has there been an impact on the practice within the team? What is needed next?

The Emerging Minds Focus Tool provides a comprehensive Quality Improvement Tool which can be used for identifying areas of focus and embedding the capability strands. For more information please see Appendix 2: Emerging Minds Focus.

7 Examples of how the Enabling Workforces Toolkit has been used

The Toolkit has been developed to be used in a flexible way that can be adapted to each organisation's needs. Outlined below are 11 case study examples of how the Toolkit has been used for embedding neuro-informed capabilities.



We've got some resources, we've got a focus. Let's go, let's start it.

Clay McCann,
School Principal




7.1 Gainsborough State School

Gainsborough State School agreed to become a trial and test site as part of Phase 2 of the [Enabling Workforces and Organisations Initiative](#). The principal was interested in utilising the [Enabling Workforces Toolkit](#) with an aim to support a shared knowledge and language across his school staff.

'Resilience' was identified as a priority neuro-informed capability strand informed through data collected through school opinion surveys that aligned with the school's strategic aims and outcomes. Having the authorising environment to start the planning process, the principal formed a small change team with the school guidance officer.

Considering existing workload for staff and competing priorities, the principal allocated time to the January Staff Professional Development/ Student Free Days to weave one of the short 'Heart' resources from the 'Resilience' strand of the toolkit.

 **Staff were shown the 'Heart' resource:**

Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership: "What surrounds us shapes us": A framework for building children's resilience to thrive in life 7 min video
- Resilience Scale & The Nest: model of impact on children's brain health

Built into the session were robust conversations about resilience, reflective questions and collaborative learning and development opportunities to explore core concepts of resilience.

Reflective questions included:

- What do we notice about the resilience of children and our families in our school?

- How does this align with the key messages of the video?

Staff participated in a Resilience Scale Reflection Activity, working in small groups to read a student case study to try to identify adversities, positive supports, skills and abilities.

Staff then reflected in small groups on the following questions:

- How do we consider the resilience of staff?
- Can this be improved?
- What could support this?

After the learning session, the change team identified next steps and learning opportunities to continue to build knowledge, understanding and commitment to better support their staff and the students and families they support.



Courtesy of Harvard Center on the Developing Child in collaboration with the Alberta Family Wellness Initiative: www.albertafamilywellness.org

7.2 Department of Youth Justice and Victim Support

7.2.1 Youth Justice Early Action Group (EAG), Townsville

Embedding into existing team 'huddles' to build collective capability and a shared language across disciplines

A multi-disciplinary workforce working in the complex space of Youth Justice with 95% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 8-16 in their service. The team weaved neuro-informed 'Heart' resources from the Enabling Workforces Toolkit into existing 'Team Huddles' with built in reflection opportunities.

Each week a Heart resource was shared during the Team Huddle. It was watched by the team together. Followed by a team yarn facilitated by the EAG Lead.

The approach supported cohesion within the team with shared understandings and language. The decision was made to continue integrating the Heart resources into Team Huddles after the trial and test period finished.

“

The real power for our group has been to do it together, as opposed to saying, “Oh, everybody go off and do your own self-paced learning”.

EAG participant

”

“

I actually think it's more beneficial than sending people off to training. It's been a real learning for me around the difference that can make.

EAG participant

”

7.2.2 Youth Justice Neurodevelopmental Disabilities Framework

Embedding resources into existing Frameworks and Practice Standards

'Heart' resources weaved into existing Framework and Practice Guide to support neuro-informed capabilities, for example Trauma.

Practical resources embedded within a framework to support practitioner learning within a framework.

7.2.3 Youth Justice Western Districts Service Centre

The Western Districts Youth Justice Service Centre operates as a frontline multidisciplinary workforce, engaging with young people subject to involuntary court orders or bail conditions. The team used the Emerging Minds **Focus Quality Improvement Tool** (see **Appendix 2**) to identify which of the five Capability Strands was a priority to work on first.

To facilitate its implementation, Emerging Minds' Focus Quality Improvement Tool and accompanying resources were introduced during a **whole-office Learning Breakfast**. This event provided all staff with the opportunity to engage in learning, collaborate and discuss potential future impacts of embedding the learning. While some staff were already familiar with the information presented through internal trainings, the session served as a valuable refresher, reinforcing the importance of integrating these learnings into everyday practice.

“

[Brain development] is an important topic for all of us to be across from leadership, those first impressions in administration through, to then people who are working one-on-one with our young people.

”

Youth Justice Western Districts Service Centre participant

7.3 Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety (DFSDSCS)

7.3.1 Southern Downs and Granite Belt Child Safety Service Centre, Ripley (Southwest Region)

The team weaved neuro-informed 'Heart' resources from the Enabling Workforces Toolkit into existing capability building such as team meetings with built-in reflection opportunities.

The Service Centre Manager introduced the Toolkit and shared the implementation plan with service centre staff.

'Heart' resources from the Toolkit, specifically from the Brain Development capability strand, were incorporated into existing Learning and Development sessions. These resources were also woven into the team's monthly Practice Commitment activities, where Team Leadership Presentations focused on a different theme each month. For example, the Leadership Team presented around the theme "Child is Paramount," incorporating the 'Heart' resource from the Toolkit: **Emerging Minds: The Whole Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child** (a three-minute video).

Additionally, Senior Team Leaders selected a 'Heart' resource from the Toolkit to show during weekly staff meetings to prompt reflective discussions.

Throughout this process, the team was supported by the Regional Director for the Darling Downs District in the Southwest Region, the Mental Health Practice Leader, and the Identified Senior Program Leader from the Office of the Chief Practitioner, DFSDSCS. Staff reported that the short length of the 'Heart' resources made them easy to implement and ideal for integrating into existing learning and development structures.

“

What I think it's done for us is to link the practice to the neuroscience and the why.

Participant

”

7.4 Children's Health Queensland Project ECHO®

Enabling Workforces Toolkit and Media Kit was shared with the Children's Health Queensland (CHQ) Project ECHO® Team.

The CHQ Project ECHO® Team deliver a range of child and youth focused communities of practice (CoP's) to frontline professions across sectors throughout Queensland.

The Toolkit, supporting shared knowledge, learning and support from neuroscience, was shared broadly across participants, panels and facilitators of CHQ Project ECHO® CoP's. A Getting Started Guide, developed as requested by an ECHO Network Coordinator, was also distributed to participants to support the socialisation of the Toolkit.

“

I've just watched a quick video about ACEs. These short videos are really helpful to learn more about things that affect children and young people and their ability to thrive.

Brain Builders
ECHO® participant

”

“

This is a great resource; can I share it with my CYMHS and Headspace colleagues?

Adolescent Health & Wellbeing
ECHO® participant

”

7.5 Neuro-informed Curricular Reviews

As part of the **Thriving Kids. Active Brains** project led by the Queensland Brain Institute at The University of Queensland and funded by Ian Potter Foundation, University of the Sunshine Coast, TAFE Queensland, and Queensland University of Technology have been engaged to support the integration of contemporary science into preservice curricula.

Curriculum reviews were underway during the writing of this guide across several courses utilising 'Heart' resources from the Toolkit.

These include:

1. Bachelor of Nursing Science
2. Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood)
3. Thompson Institute's Graduate Certificate in Mental Health and Neuroscience
4. Graduate Certificate in Public Health
5. Graduate Diploma in Midwifery
6. Bachelor of Laws.

7.6 University of Sunshine Coast

Following the Curricula Reviews, the project team have supported program coordinators at University of Sunshine Coast to embed neuro-informed resources from the Enabling Workforces Toolkit 'Heart' resources and [Understanding Brain Development](#) course. Engagement has included Deputy Head of School (Research) for the School of Health, Program Coordinator, Nursing and Program Coordinator, Bachelor of Early Childhood Education.

Updating early childhood curricula

Following engagement through Enabling Workforces and the Curricula Review group, Senior Lecturer and Program Coordinator: Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood) has updated three Early Childhood Undergraduate courses using the five neuro-informed capability strands and the Enabling Workforces Toolkit.

The Program Coordinator intentionally considered the five neuro-informed capability strands to update Early Childhood Education courses with the aim to embed neuro-knowledge and a common language. 'Heart' resources from the Enabling Workforces Toolkit have been embedded throughout course content and assessment with planning for reflective questions and collaborative learning.

This has been used to develop students' understanding of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (ATSL). For example, for ATSL Standard 1: 'Know students and how they learn', the Program Coordinator has selected the 'Heart' resource, **Emerging Minds: The Whole Child** from the 'The Whole Person' capability strand to support student's knowledge and understanding. For ATSL Professional Standard 4: 'Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments', the 'Heart' resource, **Alberta Family Wellness Initiative: Brains Journey to Resilience** from the 'Resilience' capability strand has been selected and has been planned to be the focus for learning for a 2 week period.

At the time of writing, the Program Coordinator is continuing to plan these courses with the Toolkit in mind and plans to deliver the updated courses in Semester 2, 2025.





7.7 TAFE Queensland

Following an invitation to present on Enabling Workforces at the 2025 TAFE Queensland Community Services Industry Forum, 200 educators from TAFE Qld campuses in the following teaching areas – Early Childhood Education and Care, Education Support (Teacher Aide), Mental Health, Alcohol & Other Drugs and Mental Health Peer Work, Community Work, Leisure and Health, Child Protection, Youth Work, Counselling, Aged Care & Disability.

The Enabling Workforces Toolkit has been shared with all TAFE Queensland Community Services educators in the above teaching areas and investigation is occurring with the Portfolio Librarian to student-face the resources to help build students' awareness, knowledge and skills.

There is multi-disciplinary interest in neuro-informed capability building to support a common language. Ongoing review integration and integration into the Certificate 3 and 4 Qualifications.

7.8 Dovetail

Updating learning and development resources

Dovetail is the youth-focused service of Insight, Queensland's Centre for alcohol and other drug workforce development. They support workers, services, and communities across Queensland in assisting young people engaged in alcohol and other drug use.

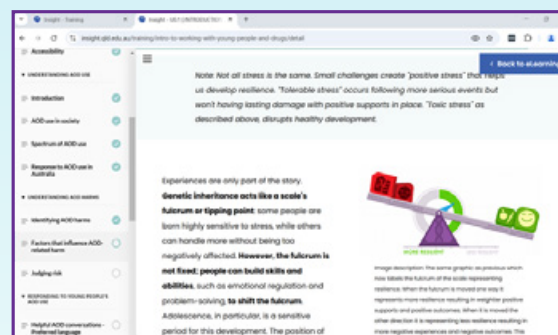
Dovetail understands that achieving better outcomes for young people who experience the highest levels of vulnerability, some of whom use substances, requires demonstrated coordinated care. In delivering training to workers from across sectors who work with young people in Queensland, it's important for Dovetail to provide concepts and frames that support cross-sector collaboration and a shared language around good practice.

Resilience is a key factor preventing the development of problematic substance use and building resilience supports the pathways out. As part of the annual review of their core one-day workshop, Dovetail used the Enabling Workforces Toolkit to select the Resilience Scale resources as useful to enhance their training.

The heart resource on the Resilience Scale, a short seven-minute video, is now included in their workshop which concisely introduces the topic of resilience and the Resilience Scale conceptual frame. They use the conceptual model in the context of young people and substance use; how workers can better collaborate to assist the young people they work with to identify the supports and skills and abilities they need to respond positively to life's adversities. As part of their workshop, they will point workshop participants to the Enabling Workforces Toolkit for further self-directed learning on resilience.

Dovetail have published an eLearning module, An Introduction to Working with Young People and Drugs, which features the Resilience Scale in the chapter on factors that influence AOD-related harms.

(Insight - U0.1 | INTRODUCTION TO ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS - An introduction to working with young people and drugs)



7.9 Head and Hand

Brain Health and Healing with Yiliyapinya Indigenous Corporation

Yiliyapinya Indigenous Corporation was invited to deliver their 'Workplace Brain Health' workshop to two groups in Queensland at the end of 2024 and in early 2025.

7.9.1 Laidley District State School

For the training delivered at Laidley District State school (an area approximately one hour from Brisbane) the primary focus was 'Understanding your own brain health so we can help others' with a secondary focus surrounding strategies to support child brain development in a school context.

All school staff were in attendance including office staff, maintenance and cleaning staff, and teacher aides, a total of 51 participants. The two-hour workshop covered information about brain development across the lifespan, and cognitive health in children and strategies to improve cognition. One of the outcomes from this workshop is for Brain Health information to be fed into the local Early Years Network meetings.

“

“Explanation about executive functioning was the most valuable.”

“This would be excellent for the childcare workforce.”

“The most important for me was understanding how the brain deals with stress and actions to help with resolving this.”

Participants

”

One of the key outcomes from both workshops was the realisation of how vital Neuro-knowledge is, and how the understanding of brain science can not only help practitioners improve their own brain health, but also enables them to help the children, young people, and families they work with in a more informed and effective way, particularly helping the shift from punitive approaches to more restorative approaches within a school context.

7.10 Department of Education

Student Engagement and Family Support Coordinators

'Heart' resources used to support integration into existing induction resources for new 'Family Support Coordinator' roles.

Short, evidence-based resources have added value to their newly developed induction.

7.11 NAPCAN

Queensland Protective Behaviours Program

As part of the National Association for Prevention of Child abuse and Neglect's (NAPCAN) commitment to strengthening child protection capability across Queensland's early years workforce, the 'Enabling Workforces Toolkit' and 'Understanding Brain Development' online course have been integrated into the digital participant kits provided on completion of the Protective Behaviours training. These resources support NAPCAN's goal of reinforcing trauma aware, brain based, and resilience building practices across the sector.

The Toolkit is shared as a tile within their electronic kit, via SharePoint, enabling participants to explore content at their own pace.

The Getting Started Guide and selected short form content (e.g. ACEs explainer videos and brain development clips) have proven especially popular in workshop follow up emails, with participants using these to extend their learning and share with colleagues.

The Enabling Workforces resources have also been used with NAPCAN Child Safe Organisation and Protective Behaviours training for Department of Education 'Early Neighbourhood Network – Leadership Group'. This included representation from across schools, early years settings and community organisations including Benevolent Society.

“

The short videos are great to revisit after the training. I used one in a team meeting to explain why protective behaviours matter.

Early Childhood Director, south east QLD

”

“

The Toolkit helped us connect trauma and brain development to our QIP goals.

FDC Coordinator, regional QLD

”

8 | Embedding change

To truly embed a practice into daily routine so that it becomes 'just the way we do things around here' and part of workplace culture – certain processes, policies, and documents will need adjusting or creating.

Mindsets are key for lasting behaviour change, especially in neuro-informed capability building. Growth-oriented mindsets foster openness to learning, feedback, and change. This can take time.

Utilising **authorising environments** provided by leadership and existing learning structures and culture will support successful implementation.

Organisational documentation is likely to need amending to incorporate neuro-knowledge. This might include changing language on existing templates or forms or adding new sections into documents such as clinical guidance manuals.

Another useful step is to **identify relevant procedures or protocols** that may need to be adjusted to include neuro-informed capabilities such as how families are engaged with in the initial 'intake' stage of interaction with the team or organisation.

Establishing processes that recognises engagement with neuro-knowledge and implementing neuro-informed capabilities can be valuable. Positive reinforcement in an appropriate manner may look like a 'shout-out' on the team channel or in a meeting.

Creating a data collection process to ensure records are kept of who has completed what neuro-informed capability professional development is worthwhile. Data collection can be as simple as a spreadsheet where staff record what professional development opportunity they have completed on what date, and comment on their experience.

Recording presentations of case studies and/or writing them up means a bank of case studies will be available for future staff. Ensuring case studies cover a mix of positions and contexts increases the likelihood of staff relating to the content and providing motivation to improve their own neuro-informed practice. Please see Appendix 3 for an example of a case study template.

Considering opportunities to **promote and communicate** the importance and value of neuro-informed capabilities is beneficial to support the overall momentum of creating opportunities to embed neuro-informed practice.

Alignment to professional standards and ensuring integration of neuro-informed capabilities as our 'core business' will support with sustainable integration.

Consider **evaluation linked to data collection** measuring outputs and outcomes.



9 | Appendices

Appendix 1: Neuro-informed capability strand definitions

Brain development and brain health

Brain health is “the state of brain functioning across cognitive, sensory, social-emotional, behavioural, and motor domains, allowing a person to realise their full potential over the life course, irrespective of the presence or absence of disorders”.³ It is also defined as “a continuous state of attaining and maintaining the optimal neurologic function that best supports one’s physical, mental, and social wellbeing through every stage of life.”⁴

Brain development tells us how positive experiences in the early years set the foundation for a lifetime of learning, health and wellbeing. The perinatal period, early years and early adolescence are key points for neuroplasticity and key opportunities for fostering, supporting and enabling positive relationships and interactions.

Understanding adverse and protective childhood experiences

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are “disruptions to the promotion of safe, stable and nurturing family relationships and are characterised by stressful or traumatic events that occur during childhood”⁵. They can have significant effects on infants’, children’s and adolescents’ physical health, mental health, development and social functioning. Without support, health and wellbeing can continue to be impacted by ACEs into adulthood.

Protective childhood experiences (PACEs) promote children’s resilience, by building and strengthening safe, supportive adult-child and peer relationships, building children’s sense of self-efficacy, and strengthening children’s connections with their spiritual and cultural traditions. PACEs help children to thrive.

Trauma and healing

Trauma is “any disturbing experience that results in significant fear, helplessness, dissociation, confusion, or other disruptive feelings intense enough to have a long-lasting negative effect on a person’s attitudes, behaviour, and other aspects of functioning”.⁶

Traumatic events can “challenge an individual’s view of the world as a just, safe and predictable place.” Trauma informed care is a framework for service delivery based on an understanding of the effect of trauma on individuals, families and communities.

When we engage in certain activities regularly, we are literally rewiring our brain, at a neurophysiological level. This rewiring means we can improve integral life skills like recognising and managing our emotions, controlling inhibitions, and better decision making. This neuro change coupled with holistic family and workforce-focused work means that profound healing can occur for the young person and the people in their ecosystem.⁷

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, healing is a holistic process, which addresses mental, physical, emotional and spiritual needs and involves connections to culture, family and land. Healing works best when solutions are culturally strong, developed and driven at the local level, and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.⁸

If people don’t have the opportunity to heal from past trauma, they may unknowingly pass it on to others. Their children may experience difficulties with attachment, disconnection from their extended families and culture and high levels of stress from family and community members who are dealing with the impacts of trauma.⁹

6 <https://dictionary.apa.org/trauma>

7 <https://yiliyapinya.org.au/>

8 <https://healingfoundation.org.au>

9 <https://yiliyapinya.org.au/>

3 World Health Organisation: [Brain Health](#)

4 Rost, N.S., Salinas, J., Jordan, J.T., Banwell, B., Correa, D.J., Said, R.R., Selwa, L.M., Song, S., Evans, D.A. and American Academy of Neurology’s Committee on Public Engagement, 2023. The Brain Health Imperative in the 21st Century—a call to action: The AAN Brain Health Platform and Position Statement. *Neurology*, 101(13), pp.570-579.

5 <https://www.apaf.org/getmedia/67d8502b-7bc6-48c3-813a-2d6ca67c2852/What-are-ACEs-Infographic.pdf>

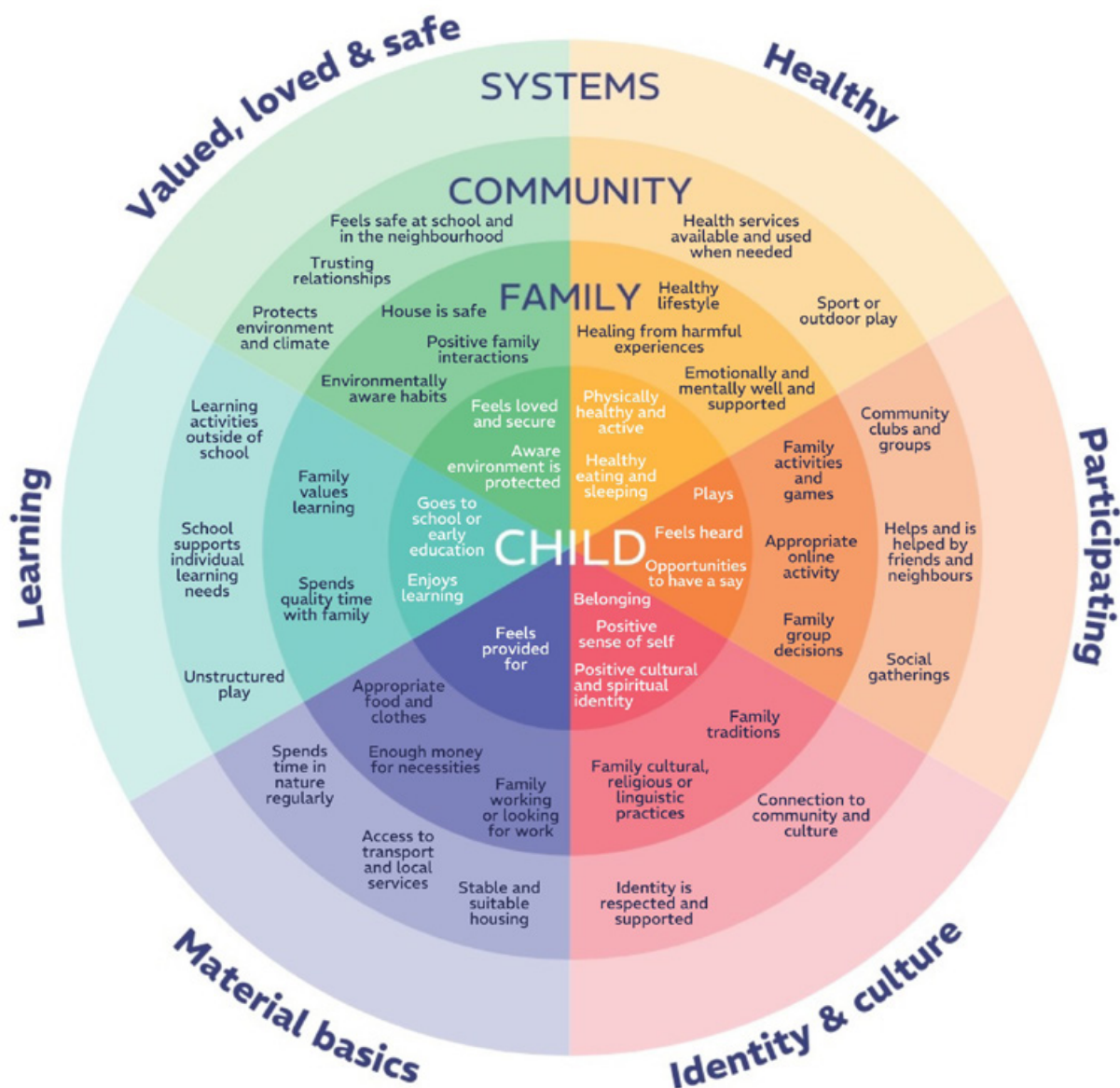
Resilience

Resilience is the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences.¹⁰ Rather than being an innate characteristic, resilience is an ability that can be strengthened or weakened over time in response to our experiences and our environments. It can also be defined as “The ability to respond positively in the face of adversity.”¹¹

The single most important factor for developing resilience in children is the presence of at least one committed and supportive relationship with a parent, caregiver or other adult.

Whole-person ecological approach

The wellbeing of children, young people and their families depends on their social and environmental contexts. The Nest Wellbeing Framework¹² outlines the ecological determinants on health. This includes at the child, family, community and systems level. Understanding cultural and spiritual identity is central to health and wellbeing.



¹⁰ American Psychological Association Dictionary

¹¹ [Resilience Scale » Alberta Family Wellness Initiative](#)

¹² [The Nest Wellbeing Framework - ARACY](#)

Appendix 2:

Emerging Minds Focus – frequently asked questions

What is Emerging Minds Focus?

Emerging Minds Focus is a web-based platform that takes organisations on a quality improvement journey in supporting the social and emotional wellbeing and mental health outcomes of infants, children and their families. This user-friendly tool has been created for service managers, organisational executives and staff to inform, motivate, plan and track quality improvement, all in one place.

Focus will help you to identify where your organisation is succeeding in supporting infants, children and families, and where there are opportunities to improve. It guides you through an efficient and structured quality improvement process.

1. How do I sign up for Emerging Minds Focus?

If you would like to sign up for Emerging Minds Focus, contact Helen Francis, info@emergingminds.com.au to express interest. After submitting your interest, one of our team members will get in touch.

2. How do I get support for Emerging Minds Focus?

We have a range of guides, videos and other resources to support you on your quality improvement journey, including a [guide on how to interpret the data from your Results Wheels](#).

3. What is a systems approach and how is it integrated into Emerging Minds Focus?

A systems approach is required at multiple levels of an organisation to create a true and sustained shift in outcomes for infants, children and families; training alone cannot sustain quality improvement.

Emerging Minds Focus supports you to explore and build upon attributes at multiple levels of your organisation, to embed mental health literacy and whole-of-family practice. This includes the mission, values and vision statements, recruitment processes, human resources, supervision, leadership and continuous professional development.

4. How will Emerging Minds Focus benefit my organisation?

Organisations often invest significantly in understanding *what* they need to change, then *how* they can change it. Emerging Minds Focus is a convenient and structured guide, designed to support quality improvement within organisations. It steps you through a structured action planning process to help turn ideas and principles into achievable actions and measurable outcomes and reach a point of sustained change.

The Change Team Survey and Organisational Survey offer a comprehensive snapshot of your starting point, which informs your understanding of *what* needs to change as you progress through your quality improvement journey. While your organisation's Executive Team might think that something is in place, practitioners and other staff members might not be aware of it or feel the same way.

Focus offers recommended 'actions' for the attributes that you prioritise. These actions include tangible activities, reflective questions and links to Emerging Minds resources, which gives you a clear roadmap for *how* this change can happen. This also eliminates the need to search for supporting resources on *how* to build an understanding of child mental health and social and emotional wellbeing across your organisation. If needed, you can create your own actions to meet your organisation's specific needs.

The 'action plan summary' collates *what* needs to happen and *how*, so you can communicate what you plan to do and what tools and supports you need to do it. This develops a collective understanding with your Executive Team or Board of Management, which is crucial for informed decision-making and creating an authorising environment.

The action plan is flexible and can be adapted over time in response to changes within your organisation. It can be changed to reflect new priorities, without losing your progress. If change is stopped or stalled, it can restart at any time, right where you left off. The time and effort invested, as well as the intellectual knowledge and staff wisdom gained along the way are retained within Focus.

Emerging Minds Focus provides you with quality improvement evidence that demonstrates your commitment, effort invested, and progress made, all in one place. In conducting your initial surveys, you establish a baseline for your quality improvement journey. You will re-conduct the same surveys periodically, so results can be compared across time, and you can also summarise all the work and milestones that have been achieved. Together, this suite of evidence creates a storyline for your quality improvement journey in supporting infants, children and their families, across your organisation.

5. How could Emerging Minds Focus sit alongside our existing frameworks and practice strategies?

As you progress through your quality improvement journey, there are opportunities to make connections between the attributes and actions within Focus, and your existing frameworks and practice strategies. In making these connections, you can align your organisational goals toward supporting infants, children and families. This will allow you to create efficiencies and optimise resource allocation, using a single plan.

6. How does the quality improvement process work?

You will begin your quality improvement journey by assembling your Change Team. The Facilitator will then invite them to use Emerging Minds Focus.

Gathering phase

Emerging Minds Focus supports your Change Team and broader organisation to complete a survey with a pre-defined set of statements. The Change Team completes their survey within the Focus platform and have the ability to add comments to their ratings.

A link to the Organisational Survey is generated by the Facilitator and sent out to staff using your internal communication processes, such as email or your intranet. This survey is completed anonymously and is done through a separate platform to Focus, which requires no login.

The data for these surveys is collected and presented separately, which allows you to compare your survey results between the Change Team and broader organisation.

Planning phase

Once both surveys have been completed, you will identify your organisation's strengths and areas for improvement, and where there is and is not a consensus. These results will help to inform improvements to internal structures, systems and processes. The Change Team can then work together to identify which attributes they want to prioritise.

Wherever you set your priorities, a list of recommended actions is provided for you to consider. These actions can be assigned to individual Change Team members. Each action prompts you to identify the activities and steps, barriers and facilitators, internal and external resources required as well as who needs to be involved. This information is collated in your action plan summary, which can be printed off and shared with your Executive Team or Board of Management for their endorsement.

Changing phase

Once the action plan summary has been developed and authorised, actions can then be undertaken by the Change Team. During this phase, the Change Team should meet on a regular basis to review their progress and action plan summary and collaborate on issues and opportunities that arise. The Facilitator takes an active project management role to support actions with individual members and the Change Team as a whole.

Reviewing phase

Over time, you can make 'progress updates' to track quality improvement from your baseline and determine if change has translated across the organisation.

'Change Team progress updates' are conducted more regularly and capture the more incremental progress made by the Change Team. As actions are completed, the Change Team can re-rate attributes to reflect how their perspective has changed based on the progress, achievements and work that has happened. This also provides the Change Team with an opportunity to review the action plan summary and consider whether there is capacity to assign and authorise new actions.

'Organisational Survey progress updates' are opportunities to review your quality improvement progress and achievements by re-surveying your staff. The new survey results will indicate whether change is being felt across the organisation and inform how your action plan summary can be updated. You should review your priorities, assign new actions, and obtain continued authorisation from your Executive Team or Board of Management.



Appendix 3:

Case study presentation preparation

Thank-you for agreeing to present a case study (or two) to the group who are starting to adopt Neuro-informed policy and practice. It is very useful to hear real life examples of how it is being used within your local context.

To help you plan what information to present, keep in mind the main objectives are for the group to:

1. Hear a detailed example of how you used and implemented the toolkit including:

- what training you completed
- what (if any) resources you engaged with
- how you ensured learning from the toolkit was translated into policy and/or practice
- sharing a specific example of working with a child/young person/family (de-identified) OR project/strategy/approach in which you used new Neuro-understandings
- what you might have done differently due to the Neuro-knowledge compared to what you may have done previously.

2. Understand on a broader level:

- the wide application of Neuro-informed policy and practice
- what challenges/obstacles you may have experienced - and ideally the resolution of these
- how you have started to embed the Neuro-knowledge in your own practice and the wider team, e.g. documents or processes formally or informally modified.

Thank you, please discuss with your Neuro-Champion if you would like any clarification on what is expected.



Collaborators

Over 450+ stakeholders including lived experience representatives, leaders, practitioners, service delivery organisations and academics were engaged. These organisations contributed invaluable insights, which ultimately led to the development of the Enabling Workforces Toolkit and the trial, test, learn locations. The collective approach supported exploration of moving 'from the knowing to the doing' using a combination of research, lived experience, along with leader and practitioner wisdom.

Particular thanks are given to the Enabling Workforces Project Team:

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