



Strategic Plan

2021 – 2023

ACTtogether
Every child matters



A Step Up for Our Kids -
Out of Home Care
Strategy 2015-2020
is an ACT Government
funded initiative

Introduction

The ACT Together Consortium was established in 2016 in response to the ACT Government's *A Step Up for Our Kids: Out of home care strategy 2015-2020*.

ACT Together has been formed and is guided by our strong belief that a consortium approach to services for children, young people and their families delivers superior outcomes. As a Consortium we bring our respective experiences, skills and commitment to achieve positive change.

As individual organisations we each have strategic goals, however it is important that we set out this shared strategy for our work at ACT Together.

The development of this Strategic Plan has provided us with an opportunity to reflect on our first years of operation together, to engage with and listen to our stakeholders and our team about what matters, and to think deeply about where and how we can have the greatest impact. There is much to be done and this Plan focuses our energies, inspires us and unites us to achieve our best.

What we know

Our Strategy is informed by what we know to be fundamental to success:

Every child matters

We want the right response to each child, at the right time, every time

Culture matters

All Aboriginal children and families have a right to culturally appropriate services and connections

Evidence & innovation matters

We must continuously improve our services, based on evidence and practice

Relationships matter

Every child and young person needs lasting connections and healthy relationships

Using our voice matters

We must exercise our responsibility to advocate for the best possible system and experience for young people

Deirdre Cheers
Chief Executive Officer



Lisa J Griffiths
Chief Executive Officer



Janise Mitchell
Deputy Chief Executive Officer



Strategic context

Each Consortium partner brings complementary vision and expertise to ACT Together's collective work. This Strategy defines our shared intent to deliver the objectives of *A Step Up for our Kids*, and to work strategically in what we do.

A Step Up for Our Kids commits to the development of a therapeutic, trauma-informed care system that brings all parts of the system together with a shared understanding and goal for children and young people. This shared understanding is articulated across three domains:

- Strengthening High-Risk Families
- Creating a Continuum of Care
- Strengthening Accountability and Ensuring a High Functioning Care System.

The vision for the Strategy is: Children and young people in care – growing up strong, safe and connected

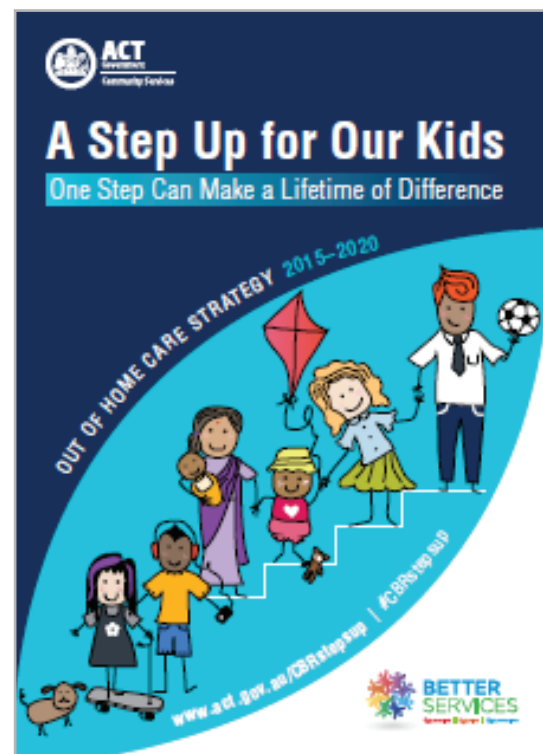
The intent behind the Strategy is:

- fewer children and young people should experience the out of home care system
- those who do come into care are safely reunified with their parents as early as possible
- early, well informed decisions are made not to return children and young people to their birth parents where risk cannot be reduced and managed
- safe, nurturing and permanent alternatives will be found for children and young people who cannot return to their family home.

The high level strategic priorities for the Strategy are:

1. Trauma-informed care
2. Preservation
3. Restoration
4. Permanency

A formal post-Strategy evaluation will assess the outcomes, and identify continuing priorities and challenges arising from delivery of *A Step Up for Our Kids*. ACT Together commits to continued support and contribution to refreshed or new ACT Government Out of Home Care Strategies.



Source: Extract from the *A Step Up For Our Kids: Out of home care strategy 2015-2020 Operational framework* (p3)

Strategic Plan 2021–2023

What we know

- Every child matters
- Culture matters
- Evidence & innovation matters
- Relationships matter
- Using our voice matters

Our intent

- 

A trauma-informed therapeutic framework
- 

A single care team wrapped around the child and their family
- 

A unified approach to all services
- 

Achieving timely reunification where possible, and offering care options, including pursuit of permanency
- 

Working with Aboriginal organisations in cultural care planning and pathways

Our priorities

1 Innovate

We will design and deliver services which continually improve a child or young person's experience with us

3 Speak up

We will advocate with impact and take action based on evidence

2 Connect

We will deliver better cultural connection and services

4 Achieve

We will measure our success and focus our efforts with an outcomes mindset

Our foundations

- 

Confident, capable people
- 

Supported carers
- 

A consortium and a team
- 

The right data and systems

Our priorities

1 Innovate

We can have great impact at the very beginning of a child's experience in out of home care. We can also further tailor our services to offer greater care and stability in all placements. So:

We will design and deliver services which continually improve a child or young person's experience with us

We need to:

- Work proactively with government and partner organisations to restore children with their birth families or with kin wherever possible, without delay
- Improve role clarity and communication across stakeholders around critical early decisions, actions and expectations
- Evolve our service design and develop our partnerships to offer better options for child and young people in our care
- Use the data, reflect on lessons and act boldly to try new ideas.

2 Connect

Our Booris, Our Way unequivocally argues for improved services for Aboriginal children and young people in care. We acknowledge our role in achieving change. So:

We will deliver better cultural connection and services

We need to:

- Advance our cultural competence to ensure Aboriginal children in care are connected to Country, family and community
- Build active, positive relationships with Aboriginal organisations
- Strengthen the supports we offer for Aboriginal foster and kinship carers
- Work closely with CYPS to respond to the findings and recommendations in Our Booris, Our Way and take action to achieve Closing the Gap goals.

3 Speak up

We have a responsibility to contribute to and influence good policy and service design and to expertly serve children and young people in decisions which affect them. So:

We will advocate with impact and take action based on evidence

We need to:

- Use and share the evidence and our collective experience to be powerful advocates for change
- Equip and empower every team member to confidently act on and represent the voice of young people
- Advocate for decisions which build sustained and stable relationships, or can achieve permanency
- Continuously adapt to what the evidence finds on what is impactful and effective.

4 Achieve

Our daily actions are critically connected to the bigger picture. Understanding and acting on what works, and responding to evaluation insight will deliver the highest quality outcomes. So:

We will measure our success and focus our efforts with an outcomes mindset

We need to:

- Develop congruent efforts across our services, with clear outcomes-based goals for all
- Advance our practice frameworks to drive quality
- Improve our ability and consistency to capture the right data and to measure and assess our work
- Respond to strategy evaluation findings for A Step Up for Our Kids.

Our foundations

Our foundations are critical to achieving our intent and delivering on priorities.



A confident, capable team

Developing and caring for our people is essential to achieving high quality care and outcomes for others. We want every member of the team to feel confident and well supported in their role.



Supported carers

Our carers are critical to the impact and success we have with each and every child. They need services and supports that empower, sustain and enable them.



A consortium and a team

We will continue to mature our consortium model because we believe in the collective capability of this approach to bring diverse expertise, services and perspectives to everything we do.



The right data and systems

Good data collection and use must underpin our decision-making. We also rely on systems which connect us, capture our efforts and insights, and support our performance as a team.

Implementation

Achieving our priorities and building on our foundations will require implementation planning. An annual action plan will set out focus areas to deliver this Strategy's intent. ACT Together's Operational Leadership Group will identify and lead on action required, and the CGG will support and monitor progress.

Tracking our success

ACT Together's work is evaluated by the ACT Government using the A Step Up for our Kids Evaluation Framework, which aligns to the National Standards for Out of Home Care.

Four lead indicators will help us focus measurement of this strategy's impact. In addition, we will track our progress by looking at success through the eyes of different people, drawing on a range of available data, asking people for their view, and analysing what both data and experiences tell us.

Lead indicators

- **We encourage the participation of children and young people, listen to and represent their voice in decisions which impact them.**
- **Aboriginal children and young people are connected to culture, and our staff and carers have the skills and supports to facilitate this.**
- **Stability and the continuity of safe relationships for children and young people are a priority.**
- **We have consistency of practice and clarity of priorities across the Consortium.**

The Operational Leadership Group, with support from Consortium leadership, will develop a baseline view of the above indicators and success statements which follow on the next page. Indicators and evidence sources to support this will be captured.

A progress report will be provided on an annual basis to the Consortium Governance Group.



Tracking our success

What children and young people will experience

Children and young people will experience ACT Together as an organisation that listens and involves them in decision-making which affects them.

Children and young people will experience safe, sustained connections. They will know that we treat reunification with family as a priority wherever it is possible, and that finding family and/or permanency is important to us.

Aboriginal children and young people will be connected to culture and Country.*

For example:

We'll show agility and creativity in finding solutions and connection with each person in our care, and support each other to do this.

We'll have advanced our practices so that listening is our way of working, consistently. Annual reviews are just one point of listening. Care teams will work confidently to see that a child's voice is privileged.

We'll also have good feedback loops in place so that people know what we heard, what we acted on, and what we've advocated for on their behalf. We'll explain any timeframes and decisions well.

We'll expertly integrate therapeutic reviews in our case management decisions, maximising the benefit of a Consortium approach for children and young people in our care.

We'll be able to show how sustained connections, stability and permanency of care have factored in our decisions, our actions and our priorities.

What kin and foster carers will experience

Our Kinship and Foster Carers will experience ACT Together as a responsive service and feel engaged and supported in their roles.

For example:

We'll respect carer perspectives and build our good practice to show carers how we have listened and acted on what they have said, or what we have advocated for.

Carers will be involved in planning, reviews and key decisions, and their views sought out.

Carer wellbeing is important to us, and we will invest in supporting carers.

We'll work hard to assist carers to understand and navigate the system.

Carers will know that they can speak up or make a complaint and that this will be acted on fairly and appropriately.

What the ACT Together team will experience

Our people will feel confident and supported in their roles with appropriate training, practices and systems.

They will know that their actions and their advocacy are both valued and effective.

The benefits of a Consortium approach will be evident.

For example:

We are guided by clear, usable practice frameworks, and have suitable supports around us to seek advice or help on any issue.

We understand trauma-informed practice and feel confident applying this in our everyday work.

We are encouraged to act and to advocate for children and young people, and for carers and families. We are supported and developed to do this effectively.

We receive feedback on our efforts and actions from leaders and managers. Our ideas are heard and responded to. Leaders take the time to explain why some things can't yet happen, or others take a priority for now.

We benefit from the cross-disciplinary expertise and perspectives that the Consortium offers us.

*This should be assessed independently by Aboriginal community organisations or leaders



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ACT Together is a consortium of Barnardos Australia,
Australian Childhood Foundation and OzChild

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