YOUTH ENGAGEMENT ALLIANCE

Inter-agency collaboration guide

Queensland Government responses to youth re-engagement in education and training
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Our message

The Youth Engagement Alliance was established to focus collaborative efforts across multiple government agencies and our education partners to ensure no young person is left behind, and to support every young person to make a successful transition to further education, training or employment.

It complements the Government’s Queensland Youth Strategy, and supports agencies to implement collaborative approaches in line with the commitments of that strategy.

This guide has been developed with one goal in mind – to support officers in the Queensland Government in their collaborative efforts, and to stimulate innovative practice in addressing the holistic needs of young people towards successful education and employment pathways.

Inter-agency collaboration is everybody’s business. It’s about government agencies working together across sectoral boundaries to achieve a common goal – every young person supported on a pathway to an independent and sustainable future. For some young people, this means highly collaborative multidisciplinary approaches to complex circumstances, for others a single agency is enough. Effective collaboration is about providing support that is fit for purpose for each individual case, with a focus on reduced duplication and improved outcomes for young people.

This guide is not the beginning or the end of this work. Agency collaboration is a core commitment and component of our success to date, and the ideas outlined in this guide are just some directions to aid innovative practice. Over time, new ideas, innovations and research in this space will further enhance our collaborative approaches.

I encourage you to explore the components of this guide in a way that works for you. Many of the sample tools have been designed for download and are available to explore, network and expand on at www.qld.gov.au/youthengagementalliance.

Importantly, I urge you to talk about this guide. The way you discuss, describe and unpack the concepts within this guide will help build a culture of collaboration across our agencies.

I’d like to thank the contributors to this guide, and congratulate the many officers throughout the state who quietly invest their daily lives in leveraging, networking and case managing to improve outcomes for our most vulnerable young people. Let’s make collaboration everybody’s business.

Youth Engagement Alliance
Children as well as adults have human rights.

These include the whole spectrum of human rights – civil, political, economic, social and cultural.

They also have the right to special protection because of their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse.

Australian Human Rights Commission

*The Queensland Youth Strategy: building young Queenslanders for a global future* was released in May 2017. The strategy is a clear blueprint for how government can include young people in opportunities and decisions that affect them, and affirms the government’s commitment to coordinated approaches to responding to the needs of vulnerable young people.
If you encounter a young person who is disengaged from education, training and employment who is not currently working with any other government agency, please contact or refer the young person to your local Department of Education youth engagement hub – contact details are available at page 51.
About this guide

This guide provides a framework to work from, comprising ideas and innovations that others have tried. It sets out concepts, principles and tools that unpack how to embed best practice in inter-agency collaboration relating to youth engagement in education and training. It demonstrates how agencies have worked together to achieve successful outcomes, and tells stories from young people’s perspectives.

It is not exhaustive or static but intended to be a dynamic set of resources that will evolve and continually improve over time.

The tools and approaches in this guide can be applied in a wide range of circumstances and with various agencies. This guide, however, focuses on the collaboration between and across Queensland government agencies and their education and training partners with education, training and employment outcomes in mind.

Every young person’s educational pathway is different. This guide is designed to support Queensland government officers in finding new ways of working together to support students to stay engaged, or to re-engage in education. On a local level, this guide can assist officers to address the needs of an individual, at the systems level to address a particular cohort, or by central office teams to consider systemic approaches to collaboration, such as shared resourcing models.

This approach is based on the premise that any door is the right door for a young person, regardless of which agency offers primary support. For all young people under the age of 18, the Department of Education (DoE) is an essential partner in planning the support services to transition that young person back into education or training. This may be down the track for some, once immediate personal or social wellbeing issues have been addressed, but a young person’s educational outcomes must be a priority for every officer and professional engaging with young people.

Specific guidance on responding to the needs of young people who are disengaged or at risk of disengaging is not contained within this guide. Each agency is accountable for a specific function and is equipped with the specialist expertise required to fulfil those responsibilities. This guide should be used in conjunction with any role requirements, induction materials, operational plans, and other guidance material relevant to each service.
Importance of education

Australia’s education system – from early childhood learning to post-secondary education and lifelong learning – has long been a pillar of this country’s economic growth and social advancement.

Education leads to innovation, increases productivity and has a direct impact on an individual’s health, wellbeing and social mobility1.

Within one year of leaving school after completing Year 12

- 10.7% of young people are seeking work
- 2.4% are not in the labour force, education or training.

Within one year of leaving school before completing Year 12

- 25.4% of young people are seeking work
- 9.5% are not in the labour force, education or training
- 18.2% of young people aged 15-19 years were unemployed in March 2017

Young people who complete school are advantaged in later life with increased employment opportunities, better health and social status, and increased lifelong income.

Education and training is an increasingly important tool in equipping all young people with the skills and knowledge they need for a successful future. The imperative to ensure that all young people successfully engage in education and training has never been more important.

1 PWC March 2017 Education will be the engine room of Australia’s future prosperity.
Key roles of state government agencies

Each agency has a role to play in re-engaging young people in education. Ultimately, a positive transition into further education could mean overcoming or learning to manage significant obstacles to get there – homelessness, family and domestic violence, separation from parents, mental illness or interactions with justice services.

Strong responses consist of a wide range of different collaborations across government.

Each young person’s journey is different. There is no one solution to disengagement, rather a range of approaches that must be flexible enough to respond to each young person’s individual circumstances.

Sometimes, young people are connected with multiple government agencies simultaneously. Health, psychological, welfare or justice concerns may require those agencies to take the lead with that young person. However, all agencies agree that education and employment are the optimal goals for each young person, and that lead agencies should engage with DoE and the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT) to devise a long-term plan to reach that goal.

“If someone is going down the wrong road, he doesn’t need motivation to speed him up. He needs education to turn him around.”

Jim Rohm
Queensland support for young people

Many agencies provide services to young people. This is a visual representation of those services that allow young people to succeed in education and training.

Youth Engagement Alliance government departments:
- Education and Training (DoE)
- Queensland Police Service (QPS)
- Queensland Health
- Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT)
- Housing and Public Works (DHPW)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP)
- Child Safety, Youth and Women (DCSYW)

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Principles of collaboration

Collaboration ensures that every young person has access to the supports they need. However, there are times when collaboration is not necessary or appropriate. For the purposes of this document there are three principles of collaboration that should be observed:

1. **Collaboration should lead to additional benefits or positive outcomes:** Collaboration among agencies should create additional benefit for the young person.

2. **Collaborative responses should be proportionate:** The collaboration process should be efficient so that the quality of output is not compromised.

3. **Collaboration should embody our core values:** The Queensland Government’s core values should underpin everything we do when we collaborate.

The benefits of collaboration

**For young people**
- Simple and more efficient transition pathways
- Support for the whole young person
- Reduced risk of ‘falling through the gaps’
- Increased access to services
- Increased use of services

**For society**
- More efficient use of government resources
- Greater contributions from young people re-engaged into society
- More inclusive society
- Concise, consistent information

**For agencies**
- More efficient service delivery
- Leveraging skills and knowledge from expert agencies on specific issues
- Comprehensive and holistic service provision
- Informed decision making
- Collegiate work environment
Different ways of doing business

Continuum of collaboration

There is a continuum of collaboration from co-existing in silos, through to integrated cohesive collaboration.

Although, fully integrated, cohesive collaboration is the preferred approach, it isn’t necessary in all circumstances. This diagram represents the different components each level of collaboration contains, while highlighting when to collaborate at what level.
Values

Outcomes focused
Our attention is placed on the needs of young Queenslanders. Our purpose is to support young Queenslanders to achieve the qualifications necessary to live a fulfilling and productive life. We know for some young people there are a range of psychological, physiological, physical and institutional supports they need before, or concurrent to, educational re-engagement.

Focusing on outcomes means considering: when cross-agency collaboration is needed, what proportionate governance is needed for that collaboration, what the evidence shows is best practice collaboration for that issue, and how to embed continual improvement into all collaboration models. It means acknowledging and supporting professional decision making at every level to encourage a philosophy of outcomes-based decision making.

Child centred
We will build a strong culture of commitment to every young person. At the core of our decisions is attention to the wellbeing of the young person. Every profession and every agency, will collaborate to focus their efforts on the immediate best interests of each young person, and continue to support each step of that young person’s transition through to re-engagement with education, training or employment. Every decision we make will acknowledge that the ‘right’ education, training or employment pathway is different for each young person. We also acknowledge that vocational education and training is the right pathway for vocationally oriented young people, not a secondary option to further education or an alternative education pathway.

Holistic
We will provide a continuum of services accessible to all young people. Their needs can be complex requiring a combination of inclusive services and interventions provided by numerous agencies working in tandem. Regardless of a young person’s point of entry, there is no wrong door, and young people will be able to access the right mix of support services provided by the Queensland Government and its partners. Professionals who engage with young people will be cognisant of the complex concerns a young person may be encountering, and will be alert to circumstances that may warrant collaborative approaches and/or referral to other support services.
Our work is underpinned by an agreed set of core values

Local responses
People at the front-line are the best at identifying the needs of young people. They know how to deliver flexible, creative and innovative strategies to re-engage them. Information sharing, collaboration, and tools and resources can help frontline staff to work efficiently. Staff at central offices and in regional teams will work to empower local decision-making and ensure decisions about re-engagement programs incorporate local knowledge and expertise.

Reciprocity
Our actions must demonstrate a willingness to collaborate. Our interactions will necessitate some give and take and encourage diverse views. Every agency involved can bring valuable skills and expertise to the table, and we will respect each other’s expertise and the multi-disciplinary view we can achieve together. The diverse services we offer to young people are deservedly rich and each professional and every officer is the best person to make decisions in their area of expertise.

Information sharing
We must be willing to share information so people can make informed decisions. Professionals and managers on the ground can only make good decisions about a young person when they have all the information they need. The flow of information between departments, while complying with ethical and privacy protections, is vitally important. An information sharing charter is being developed to give officers and professionals an understanding of legislated information-sharing powers, and the expectations of the Alliance when applying these powers.
Success factors

To develop this guide, the Youth Engagement Alliance has considered many models of inter-agency collaboration occurring throughout the state which provide a solid evidence base. This guide highlights some of the ideas and approaches developed by local agency staff, which you can adopt and adapt to use in other situations.

Models of successful collaboration share some common factors.

1. Clear criteria for intervention

To improve the chances of a collaboration being successful, you need to determine why working together is the best approach, establish common goals, and set realistic expectations.

2. Evidence-based decision making

Evidence-based practice is about making decisions through the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of the best available evidence from multiple sources to increase the likelihood of a favourable outcome. This guide promotes good practice indicators that you can use to make informed decisions about what practice should apply in different situations.

3. Genuine agreement to appropriate governance

Collaborations must be collegiate and flexible enough to encourage participation regardless of jurisdictional affiliation or size. A collaborative environment uses a governance arrangement that is explicit, open, transparent and sustainable, and defines accountabilities. Discussing up front your expectations, limitations and accountabilities will make your collaboration more effective. An agreement between parties should support service delivery.

4. Commitment to seamless support

Lack of collaboration is problematic for individuals whose multiple service needs cannot be met by a single provider (Penner, 1995, Tuma, 1989), making it more likely they will fall through service delivery cracks (Burchard & Schaefer, 1992). When you are committed to seamless support, it means you stay connected with the young person and your collaborating agencies until you are confident another agency can meet that young person’s needs.

5. Focus on continual improvement

Effective collaborators focus on improving results and delivering outcomes. Your aim is to find ways to improve services and processes over time.

6. The rights of young people firmly embedded in practice

Involving service users is important to the success of collaboration (Winkworth & Healy, 2009). If young people are involved in decision making it can benefit them by providing an opportunity to be heard — a central tenet of the Australian Government’s Social Inclusion Agenda (Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2008).

The Queensland Youth Strategy emphasised this, and the upcoming Youth Charter will guide agencies in delivering on this commitment.

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2 Sicily statement of evidence-based practice
Values in practice

Disengagement and re-engagement are not linear processes. These processes and interactions are more accurately described as cyclical, reciprocal and reinforced over time. This diagram illustrates the mixture of inputs and outputs that may change in intensity and nature over time as the issues and needs of a young person evolve.

The six elements of collaboration

1. Assessing risks and opportunities
2. No wrong door
3. Deciding when to collaborate
4. A holistic response
5. Flexible and innovative local responses
6. Seamless support

“Until we get equality in education, we won’t have an equal society”

Sonia Sotomayor
Evidence-based decision making responds to

- Clear criteria for intervention
- Determine holistic needs of the young person and community
- Assess the risks to the person and community
- Governance structures for multi-agency responses
- No wrong door
- Roles, decision making, resources
- Systems-based opportunities
- Community and cohorts
- Individual young people
- Pass the baton
- Take the lead
- Respect professional boundaries
- Local responses
- Inclusive of family and community
- Embed the rights of the young person in practice
- Child centred
- Outcomes focused
- Holistic
- Different points of entry and transitions

- Reciprocity
- Role, decision-making, resources
- Information sharing
- Evidence-based decision making responds to

Different points of entry and transitions

- Different points of entry and transitions

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1. Assessing risks and opportunities

Investing in collaboration takes time and effort, and sometimes resources, so it is important that the response is proportionate to the issue.

Developing a multi-agency approach to working with a disengaged young person can create shared understanding, and reduce the likelihood of agencies working at ‘cross-purposes’ and duplicating effort.

Presenting a united front provides a better experience for young people and their families. Young people and their families can become fatigued and confused by the different services available, particularly if they are required to explain their stories time and again to different agencies. Collaboration promotes seamless service and less risk of needs ‘falling through the gaps’, which can occur in a single agency response.

Risk Factors

Disengagement can happen slowly over time, or suddenly as the result of trauma or an incident. Responding to that continuum means acting as early as possible, and working to ‘turn the curve’ for every disengaged young person. Each agency working with a young person can use its own process to assess the level of risk to the person, and to the community, associated with that situation. That level of risk should inform decisions about what intervention is needed and whether a collaborative model is the best approach.

A range of factors may contribute to a young person becoming disengaged, or being at risk of disengaging from their education. For example, a young person may have just been removed from a family violence situation, which has resulted in reduced housing security, reduced family support, disrupted social and support networks, a change of school, concerns about their mental health and anti-social behaviour, and non-attendance at the new school.

A coordinated multi-agency response would enable planned responses for this young person to support their educational re-engagement while working through their social, health and housing support needs.

Similarly, at a system level, when developing a program to support young people who experience family violence, you should consider the mental health supports that may be needed, and for any school-age young person, include education participation in the design of the program, in partnership with DoE.
‘Tom’ is an 11-year-old male placed under a guardianship order with Child Safety at seven years of age. He has a significant history of being physically and emotionally harmed as well as being neglected. Tom was also sexually assaulted by an older male.

The Guidance Officer (GO) worked with the Child Safety Officer (CSO) to make a referral to the Evolve Inter-agency Service program to provide intensive therapeutic service to Tom and assist the key people in his life to implement a collaborative approach to treat his trauma background, and to aid him in achieving greater behavioural and educational outcomes.

The GO worked closely with Tom, the Evolve clinician and the stakeholder team to develop goals and a treatment plan to inform the review of the Education Support Plan. This stakeholder group met regularly to ensure their shared vision and agreed goals were being achieved.

Tom was kept at the centre of all discussions and interventions. His accommodation stabilised and he developed a safe, nurturing and trusting relationship with the carer. Tom’s aggressive behaviour towards other students and staff significantly decreased. His attention improved resulting in improved academic results.

Tom’s attendance returned to full time and he successfully transitioned to high school.
Coordinated Care for Vulnerable Young People

The Coordinated Care for Vulnerable Young People (CCYP) initiative in Far North Queensland is a good example of agencies coming together to form a coordinated response to the very public risk-taking behaviours of some young people in Cairns. The term ‘coordinated care’ describes the delivery of systematic, responsive and supportive care to people with complex chronic care needs.

**Cooperation, coordination and collaboration are happening because of relationships that have been developed through CCYP.**

When we are faced with high-risk and complex issues, we establish a formal governance structure to guide us in our work. The CCYP is underpinned by a local partnership agreement which formalises our commitment to coordinated service delivery amongst member agencies.

One of our priorities as part of the CCYP is to deliver a multi-agency approach to make sure young people remain engaged. We consider each young person’s engagement with education or training at three levels. Firstly, the reference group provides high-level, co-ordinated and strategic responses to issues that arise, including engagement in education and training. The complex needs panel coordinates operations, including services to support young people to remain engaged or re-engaged. And stakeholder groups come together as required to coordinate service responses for individual clients.

This governance arrangement creates a platform for developing strategic links to regional-level networks that can support a consistent and coordinated service response for our region.

“When the Panel is a great tool for building trusting and constructive relationships between government and non-government stakeholders.”

Youth worker
Indicators of risk

Not all young people who experience risk factors become disengaged. Disengagement is considered in the literature as not a linear process or a definitive destination\(^3\).

Being resilient helps young people to cope with the complexity of their everyday lives so they can ‘bounce back’ when they experience risk factors in their lives. Queensland schools are explicitly embedding resilience support in the curriculum, as a preventative strategy, but for some young people this is too late.

A spectrum of youth engagement exists where a young person may be under-engaged, or disengaged from one or more aspects of their life, education, family or their peers. Agencies must be able to assess the potential risk to determine the correct level of intervention. Indicators that a young person maybe at risk of disengaging can alert agencies that action may be required.

While indigeneity is not the primary factor, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are over-represented among disengaged young people. For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, culturally competent service delivery at a local level achieves better outcomes.

DoE is working to improve its tracking of early ‘warning signs’ to turn the curve for young people at risk of disengaging from education, before they become disengaged and escalate to needing substantial requirements. They’re also embedding a range of student engagement strategies including teaching practices, support programs and alternative education services to ensure young people who can continue in schooling are supported to do so. This may mean engaging other agencies early in preventative measures, but often it will just mean applying innovative, inclusive, engaging teaching and education techniques such as flexible attendance and VET programs. For more information visit qld.gov.au/youthengagement.

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\(^{3}\) Preventing Youth Disengagement and Promoting Engagement, Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth – August 2008
Queensland Pathways College

The DoE Metropolitan region identified that many young people were not thriving in the schooling environment. The trick was to know when to address their needs by delivering diversified options in school and when out-of-school, cross-agency support was needed. Queensland Pathways College (QPC) provides an alternative learning space for young people who are best placed in out of school settings.

“We are co-located and collaborate with each other daily – we don’t wait for set meeting dates.”

Head of campus, QPC

Schools identify young people who are not currently thriving in the school setting, and refer them to a Transition Pathways Officer (TPO). The TPO considers the young person’s needs from a holistic perspective to decide if in-school options are best, or if a transition to the QPC or other alternative setting would deliver a better outcome for the young person.

Youth Justice is a key contributor to this model. Three full-time youth justice workers are funded to be onsite at QPC to work alongside DoE staff for high-risk young people in delivering a smooth transition. Governance structures are in place at senior levels while work at the local level is more informal.

Through collaboration with TAFE Queensland, QPC is operating on TAFE campuses. QPC currently operates at Mt Gravatt, Goodna, Bundamba, Bracken Ridge and Pimlico TAFE campuses and may expand to other sites.

“All of our students undertake certificates as part of their learning program.”

Teacher

Young people who attend a QPC experience a united front which also provides them with a seamless transition between support services. All agencies work together towards a common goal. There is a shared vision that is focused on providing a successful transition.

“We don’t differentiate staff by which agency they are from. We have built strong relationships and share a common goal.”

Transitions pathways officer
2. No wrong door

Regardless of their point of entry, there will be no wrong door. Young people will be able to access appropriate support services, provided by any agency.

Young people may enter the system through an agency, or multiple agencies depending on their needs.

Such sharing of information is intended to enable each professional to provide the most effective support possible. When working with other agencies, it is important that everyone is clear about what information can be shared, who can share it, and how it should be shared.

The Youth Engagement Alliance is developing an information sharing charter which will embed these principles and provide guidance on the application of information sharing legislation.

Do you have a culture of no wrong door?

Information sharing

People making decisions about a young person, whether at the local, regional or central level, can only make good decisions when they have all the information they need. The flow of information among departments, while complying with ethical and privacy protections, is vitally important to ensure agencies can make decisions in the best interests of each young person.

You should seek consent from the young person before disclosing personal information. You should be guided by the Public Service Code of Conduct and remember that disclosure and exchange of a young person’s information should comply with relevant statutory requirements.

No young person should be subject to judgement, prejudice, unjust treatment or reduced rights as a result of information sharing.

Do you have a clear process for sharing information?
Logan Youth Foyer

Access to stable, adequate shelter plays a major role in the health and wellbeing of young people. It provides the safety and security to allow participation by providing safety and the security that allows participation in the social, educational, economic, and community aspects of their lives (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2010).

The Logan Youth Foyer is an innovative initiative of the DHPW that provides supported accommodation for single young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Through collaborative working relationships, the program provides young people with the opportunity to engage in education and training while supporting them in affordable living and providing links to other agency support services.

As part of the Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027, the DHPW has confirmed a commitment to build two new youth foyers at the Gold Coast and in Townsville.

“Secure, stable affordable housing provides the foundation for young people to complete their education and find employment.”

Hon Mick de Brenni, Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Sport, May 2017.

48.6% of Queenslanders seeking assistance for homelessness are FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

35.9% of Queenslanders seeking assistance for homelessness are aged under 18 years of age

15,269 young people in Queensland aged under 18 years are seeking assistance for homelessness
Youth Employment Program

DATSiP's Youth Employment Program (YEP) brokers employment, training or further education pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, and supports them to participate in the labour market.

Directors-General of DATSiP and DoE formalised a collaborative arrangement by signing a MoU enabling DoE officers to share relevant information required for DATSiP’s YEP.

The MoU guides ongoing collaboration and information-sharing between DATSiP and DoE to support the economic participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, in particular, Year 12 graduates transitioning from Queensland state high schools to training or employment.

In practice, local alliances are formed to improve collaboration. For example, in Far North Queensland Region, the DoE and DATSiP regional offices developed an engagement strategy to enhance the working relationship between departments, and to improve knowledge about and implementation of joint projects and initiatives, in particular, DATSiP’s YEP and DoE’s Pathways projects.

The engagement strategy outlines joint key performance indicators, joint school visits at YEP priority schools, and the need for regular meetings to understand the cohort at each school and the value each agency can bring in offering opportunities.

“An investment in knowledge pays the best interest.”

Benjamin Franklin
3. Deciding when to collaborate

**When to collaborate**

You should consider inter-agency collaboration when a young person’s needs can be met more effectively and efficiently through agencies working together.

Collaboration is not always about sharing the load and it can be as simple as a phone call to check that there is no duplication of services, or about liaising across agencies to agree to eligibility criteria for a new program or initiative. You should examine each scenario on a case-by-case basis.

In local situations, where school-age young people are involved, DoE will be a vital partner.

**When not to collaborate**

Collaboration is not always necessary or appropriate. Some issues are focussed within a single portfolio, and best managed by a single agency. If a young person needs urgent or specialised care from a health professional, or immediate protection from harm, you should pass the baton to the appropriate agency for response.

It is important to recognise when specialised care is required. Specialised training might be required to support staff in recognising the warning signs of at-risk students who are experiencing mental health issues, and may be at risk of harm. Knowing which referral pathways are available, and which one is most appropriate should inform decision making.

For example, if a teacher suspects that a young person may be experiencing hearing difficulties, it is important to refer them for expert advice and support from professionals qualified to assess the needs and respond accordingly.

The role and expertise of each agency should be respected, and collaboration should provide support and information sharing that will assist each agency in their role.

You should always operate within the legislative requirements and administrative powers relevant to your agency. You should act and make decisions in accordance with your delegated authority. Collaboration should not dilute the responsibilities of respective agencies nor should it be used as a mechanism for straying into other areas of responsibility. Inter-agency collaboration may not be necessary if an issue is routine or straightforward.

There may already be groups or networks in your area that can facilitate collaboration on your particular issue. Explore with your colleagues what exists and works best in your area.

When agencies collaborate and make decisions, record-keeping and storage needs to occur. You should familiarise yourself with the record-keeping and storage requirements of your agency and discuss them with your partners.
Questions for you to consider when deciding if inter-agency collaboration is required:

**At an agency level**
- Is the issue multi-faceted?
- Can one agency resolve the issues for the young person/people on their own?
- Is it likely that other services/programs are being accessed by the young person/people?
- Do you need other agencies to provide enhanced program or service delivery?
- Is the time it may take to collaborate proportionate to the issue being faced by the young person/people?
- Is the issue complex or long term with likely future implications?
- Will collaboration reduce the risk of duplication of services?
- Do the people delivering programs and services have the relevant cultural capability?

**At an individual level**
- Is the young person of school age?
- What is the young person’s current education status?
- Is the young person enrolled in and attending education or training?
- Would the young person benefit from support from other agencies?

**Governance model**

Different scenarios require different levels of governance. Good governance is about developing a process that balances efficiency and effectiveness to achieve good decisions. Some existing government processes facilitate collaboration on significant policy and programs and may remove the need to create new governance structures.

You may choose a formal or informal collaboration model depending on the nature of the issue, the number of agencies involved, and the level of risk to the young person and/or the community.
Who to contact

You should establish a local network of relevant contacts from each state government agency. DoE has established Youth Engagement Hubs in each of its seven regional areas to focus strategic educational re-engagement activities. These hubs can serve as a key point of contact for collaboration in the absence of other networks and relationships. Refer to this guide’s Tools and Templates section.

To decide which agencies to contact, you should assess the most immediate needs of the young person.

Consider the following questions when deciding which agencies to collaborate with:

Is the young person...

- engaged or disengaged in education?
- in contact with child safety officers?
- involved in a QPS investigation?
- involved with youth justice?
- experiencing a critical or ongoing health disorder?
- in out-of-home care?
- experiencing housing insecurity?
- experiencing domestic violence?
- experiencing family disruption?

Taking the lead

When a young person comes into contact with an agency, and a multi-agency response is required, you should identify a lead with appropriate authority to facilitate the multi-agency response. The most appropriate lead may not necessarily be the one in direct contact with the young person. Accountability for driving the response may sit with an individual, an agency, or inter-agency group at the systems level, whereas the point of contact for an individual young person may be the responsibility of the officer with the best relationship with the young person, or the officer who is dealing with the most immediate need.

The lead should take responsibility for appropriate levels of collaboration and contact proportionate to the circumstances.

How do you lead by example?

Do you have a network of contacts in other agencies?
Mental health

Teachers are often the first people, outside of the family, to notice when a young person is experiencing mental health difficulties. The trick is to ensure those in the school system can connect vulnerable young people with someone who can help them.

A partnership between DoE and QHealth, Ed-LinQ and Child Youth Mental Health Services, provides consultancy and specialised mental health services for students who are most at risk of mental health issues. An important feature of the initiative is the Cross-sectoral Workforce Development Program. The program delivers tertiary-level training to specialist staff such as guidance officers on child and youth mental health topics, including the assessment and management of non-suicidal self-injury, and childhood anxiety. The training focuses on strengthening cross-sectoral communication, collaborative action and shared-care approaches among professionals from mental health, education and primary care service systems.

When a student is identified as being at significant risk or presents with mental health difficulties requiring additional support, mental health coaches and guidance officers support schools to work with clinical care providers and external agencies to ensure they receive the right support. Other services are sought when needed.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people experience the greatest risk to their mental health

One in four young people are at risk of serious mental illness

15.4% of Australians aged 16 to 24 have experienced an anxiety disorder in the last 12 months

The risk of mental illness is the most prevalent in the later teen years
Case Study

Complex care panels

Complex care panels (CCP) use a formal governance structure to ensure a young person’s rights are protected. They promote transparency of decision making, facilitate collaboration and communicate with families. To ensure the CCP operates effectively, partner agencies sign a Local Partnership Agreement committing to work together.

“We come together to find a shared solution and then respond as a community.”

Child safety officer

In response to a school in St George reaching out for support, the DoE regional office established a panel of local agency stakeholders to support students and their families that were at high risk of disengaging. The team got the right people around the table with a shared goal in mind.

“We working collaboratively means we can avoid the overlap of services to students and families.”

Stakeholders who live in, and service the area, facilitated a conversation on how to tackle the issues being faced in the local school. They work-shopped a shared purpose for the group, using existing local programs wherever possible.

Each time the group meets, they agree to a course of action for each young person and allocate tasks. They nominate a lead agency – usually the one with the strongest relationship with the young person – to be a single point of contact for the young person and their family. They review each case periodically and adjust their actions when they need to.

They share information strictly within the bounds of the CCP’s governance and confidentiality structure to protect the rights of young people. Their meetings focus on actions which are carefully documented. Each agency manages their own resources and uses existing funded positions. The group maintains standing agenda items to remind attendees of the CCP process and their confidentiality obligations.

“We try different strategies until we find something that works.”

Regional project officer, DoE
4. A holistic response

**Holistic service**

Many young people face multiple and complex issues which require the expertise and support of several agencies working together.

Our agencies work to grow staff awareness and understanding of young people’s holistic needs, and to facilitate collaborative approaches that can meet whole-of-child needs. In addition, agencies work to educate their partner agencies on available services, contemporary research and practices, and opportunities for collaboration, networking and information sharing.

**Respect views and expertise of others**

The quality of the relationships between partners can influence the effectiveness of a collaboration. Each agency brings different perspectives, information and expertise to the table. When managed effectively, and in a respectful environment, this is considered a strength. It is important that the group share a vision and remain focused on delivering the best outcome for the young person. For ideas and approaches to building a shared vision and running a stakeholder meeting, see the Tools and Templates section of this guide.

Our actions must demonstrate a respect for the expertise of others, a willingness to collaborate, and an openness to diversity of perspectives. A multi-disciplinary approach is particularly effective in problem solving because multiple agencies bring complementary skills that together, can help meet the needs of a young person.

Do you know what services other agencies offer?
For young people, the journey to educational transition is rarely linear. If a young person feels culturally connected, then the response you design needs to respond to the connection they feel. As the needs of a young person change over time, the level and type of intervention required to support that young person will evolve. Regular reassessment should be part of your approach. Such assessment can be as simple as a quick check on progress, a chat with the young person, or a more rigorous assessment involving multiple stakeholders.

When an intervention is not achieving a positive outcome for a young person, or if their situation has changed, you may need to adopt alternative strategies. Your approach to collaboration needs to be flexible and the level of governance may change as the complexity of the issue fluctuates.

**How do you prioritise requests from other agencies?**

**Case Study**

**Pop-up classrooms**

DoE and Youth Justice are working together to ensure that young people who have had contact with the youth justice system have the support they need to reach their goals.

Locally-based officers identified an opportunity to provide a more seamless service to young people by ‘popping up classrooms’ at youth justice centres. This was the driver to develop a shared vision to connect young people, released from detention and/or sentenced to youth justice orders, with education or training.

At the Gold Coast, front-line staff from the Youth Justice Service Centre and the DoE South-East Region re-engagement team developed a single contact point for young people to reconnect with education. Youth Justice provides space at each of its three service centres for a DoE-funded re-engagement teacher to provide on-site education.

The agencies held multi-agency panel meetings in the early stages of the project, however later, they decided a more flexible approach of direct referrals was more efficient. The team decided they did not need a formal governance structure; however an MoU at the senior level empowered staff to establish relationships at a local level.

Discussions between DoE and Youth Justice workers enable them to plan for transitioning young people from one-on-one schooling, to group learning sessions and, when they are ready, back into a school environment. This approach ensures that support is provided for both educational and psychological needs.

“Local staff identified a need and we worked together to fill a gap in service.”

Youth justice officer
The Booyah project

Project Booyah provides support for young people who have already disengaged from education. Booyah exists in several communities and is designed to be flexible so it can respond to local needs.

Teams working on Project Booyah collaborate to support young people in re-engaging in community and education by providing a structured strengths-based program that incorporates respect, developing vocational pathways and employability skillsets, and offering adventure-based activities. The project encourages young people to connect with family, community and culture.

More than 450 young Queenslanders have participated in Project Booyah.

An initiative of the Queensland Police Service, the project involves collaboration with government and non-government agencies, all sharing responsibility for supporting young people, particularly people involved in the youth justice system. The project operates through collaboration between TAFE Queensland, DoE, Health, and Youth Justice, and was supported via funding through the DESBT Skilling Queenslanders for Work Program.

Post-program offending rates have been reduced.

272,000+ children and young people help care for their relatives
5. Flexible and innovative local responses

Supporting re-engagement of young people requires innovation on a daily basis to identify new approaches and solutions to the complex situations they face.

This guide celebrates the innovation already occurring across the state and is designed to support you in building on this success through sharing learnings and research to further our efforts to promote innovation through an evidence-based approach. The Youth Engagement Alliance wants to empower this innovation, and through its information sharing charter, articulate whole-of-government expectations for collaboration to support the re-engagement of young people in education and employment.

Information sharing, collaboration, tools and resources can support strategic planning of programs and interventions, and build collective intelligence, while also protecting the privacy and dignity of young people.

Empowering innovation

People at the front-line are the best at identifying the needs of young people. They know how to deliver flexible, creative and innovative strategies to re-engage them. Solutions rarely emerge in isolation. Innovation happens through collaboration. Bringing the right people together solves problems and promotes innovation.

Having the right organisational capacity enables you to deliver successful local responses. People making decisions need to be authorised and educated to do so. Clear delegations and access to professional development enable decision-makers to make meaningful contributions.

How do you empower your staff to innovate?
Townsville co-location

This Townsville project is a grass-roots initiative established in response to a need for better communication between agencies at the local level. The local school community was concerned by the risk factors associated with the behaviour of some young people and sought our help. Regional officers from DoE and Youth Justice identified the need for more collaboration to get the right placement for high-risk young people.

Thanks to an effective collaboration, a significant cultural change has occurred where the order placed on a young person recognises DoE as the agency that determines the best educational destination for that young person. This small change is significant because it allows flexibility in the decision making with officers exploring options first and then deciding on the most appropriate pathway.

A DoE employee hot-desks with the Youth Justice team one day per week. The teams have established a direct line of communication between their agencies, based on the trust and rapport between local officers. There are no delays in communication in dealing with each case because the officers are co-located.

“I feel like I am part of the team.” Project officer

Embracing youth voice

Young people should be present and have a voice when decisions are being made that affect them. Collaborative relationships with parents and communities that focus on communication, learning partnerships, participation and consultative decision-making, offer the most supportive approach.

The best interests of the young person must always come first. You should attempt to involve parents where it is in the best interests of the young person. Any decision to step away from a parent’s preferences and decisions must be taken very seriously, and such a decision needs to be clearly communicated to any other agencies working with the affected young people.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, family, community and kin should be involved in the decision-making process.

Making these decisions is serious business and requires the highest level of professional expertise. Your decisions must be transparent and open to scrutiny. These decisions can change a young person’s life. If a decision is overturned at appeal or review, it may have already had a significant impact on that young person’s future.

The DCSYW Queensland Youth Charter will outline the Queensland Government’s commitment to working consultatively with young people and will incorporate best practice principles for effectively engaging young people in policy and program design.
Multi-agency youth support (MAYS)

The Multi-agency youth support (MAYS) initiative responds to referrals made by the Cairns Safer Streets Taskforce to mobilise multi-agency responses to individual students so that they remain engaged in learning. This collaborative approach ensures that services are targeted, effective and efficient.

“We have a clear understanding of each other’s responsibilities and the different services that each agency offers.”

Housing support officer

Recognising that every young person is unique and their circumstances different, the team develops multi-agency responses tailored to each young person.

Teams from the different agencies assess referrals and share information about the services already being provided and the services that are needed.

The team has a clear governance structure in place that provides a framework for decision making while allowing sufficient authority to enable officers to take immediate and decisive action when needed. Originally, oversight was provided centrally but over time it has shifted to the local officers.

“When a young person comes into our scope of influence we want to have the full story.”

School principal
The Aurukun response

The response in Aurukun is an example of a community-led approach to support the most vulnerable young people in the area. The pressure to respond to quick changes in the circumstances required an immediate and targeted multi-agency response.

“I worked on the ground in Aurukun and it was evident to me that generating better life circumstances for our youth meant working with mindsets of the youth themselves.”

Lead officer

A number of young people in Aurukun became disconnected from education, training, health and wellbeing agencies.

Extensive media coverage created a ‘problem narrative’, casting the youth of Aurukun as lead agents of dysfunction.

Progress was tracked and gains made public so they could be celebrated by the community.

Far North Queensland regional directors of Health, Education, Police, DATSIP and Communities, collaborated to oversee the strategy. A senior government coordinator, with deep knowledge of the Wik people in the community, was appointed to direct the Premier’s 4 Point Plan responding to the safety, education, governance, and employment needs of the community, including young people.

Every 12- to 19-year-old in Aurukun was individually assessed so that agencies could work from a platform of fact. This effectively gave a name and face to the task. Every young person was case managed and prioritised according to their age and risk. Smaller focus groups with multi-agency representation were formed with specific tasks.

The goal was to enrol every one of the students from Years 7 to 9 into the newly re-established secondary program.

A handful of 19- to 24-year-olds attended every meeting or conversation that occurred in the community to reflect the principle of ‘nothing about them, without them’.

DCSYW is now developing an Aurukun Youth Strategy in collaboration with the community and local agencies.
Young people are at greater risk of disengaging at transition points during their progression through education and when transitioning between agencies or settings. We must work together to ensure we don’t let go before a young person is secure on their path.

Research shows that young people who have experienced challenges in their childhood, or who possess less resilience traits, will continue to need support from services and agencies into their early adult years. Turning 18 years of age does not preclude agencies from their responsibility to support young people into a successful pathway to further education, training or employment.

We should collaborate to ensure that we don’t let go of any young person. Collaboration is about working out the best agency to provide a child-centred response, based on a child’s individual needs. When the lead agency in a collaboration needs to change, for example when a young person transitions back into education after youth detention, we should manage it carefully to ensure we don’t let go of that young person.
Transition to Success

The Transition to Success program (T2S) is a Youth Justice initiative created for at-risk young people who are disengaged from education and at risk of entering the justice system. Youth Justice developed the program in 2014 through partnerships with schools, registered training organisations, not-for-profit organisations and private businesses.

This program is now running in ten sites: Cairns, Atherton, Aurukun, Townsville, Bundaberg, Sunshine Coast, Logan, Gold Coast, Hervey Bay and Western Districts in Brisbane. T2S is changing the lives of the young people who participate in the program. It gives them an opportunity to re-engage with education and training and develop skills to help them find work.

In Townsville, 92 per cent of young people who have graduated from the T2S program have gone on to re-engage with school, engage with further training or gain employment.

Thirty-nine young people involved in the program have obtained jobs in scaffolding, carpentry, agriculture, panel beating, construction, landscaping and hospitality.

Part of the program’s success has been due to support staff remaining in contact with the young person until they are secure in their employment or education destination.

A range of organisations are involved in the success of T2S including Youth Justice, DESBT, DoE, TAFE, Queensland Health, Department of Transport and Main Roads, Headspace, PCYCs, North Queensland Cowboys, community-based organisations, and businesses who are giving young people opportunities to find employment. Without their help, the program could not succeed.
Alternative learning spaces

The Alternative Learning Space Program offers young people an opportunity to engage in mainstream education through the Capricornia School of Distance Education (CSDE) which provides support for students through face-to-face tuition. The program supports at-risk young people in Years 10 to 12 who are young mothers, victims of bullying, or have been diagnosed with medical conditions such as anxiety or depression, as well as those students who have not been successful in a mainstream setting.

Professionals such as youth workers, guidance officers and youth justice workers support students through individualised case management and specialised care.

The program’s success is attributed to the strength of the partnerships that combine agency support services within a strong local network of youth workers, volunteers and mentors.

These partners are deeply connected to each young person and don’t let go until the student has achieved educational progress.

Regional staff collaborate to share their local knowledge of the issue. This is vital to the program’s success because everyone has a stake in the outcome.
Next steps

The information and tools in this guide will grow over time as new best practice examples and research become available. Please visit www.qld.gov.au/YouthEngagementAlliance to learn more.

We encourage you to discuss the content of this guide with your team and share your practices. By sharing your ideas and successes, you can inspire others.

Collaboration improves our chances of achieving positive results and allows us to support each other in our roles. It’s everybody’s business!

“Education... is the key to unlocking other human rights”

Katarina Tomasevski
Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the time and effort of contributors to this document. We would like to thank the students, schools and agencies who were interviewed for the preparation of the case studies. We recognise their efforts, achievements and warmly acknowledge their participation.

Alliance members

A Youth Engagement Alliance has been established between relevant agencies and partner organisations to address a range of issues through stronger multi-agency collaboration. The following agencies have pledged to work together to find innovative ways of re-engaging our most vulnerable young Queenslanders.

- Department of Education
- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Queensland Treasury
- Queensland Health
- Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women
- Department of Housing and Public Works
- Queensland Police Service
- Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
- Department of Employment, Small Business and Training
- Independent Schools Queensland
- TAFE Queensland
- Queensland Catholic Education Commission

Infographic sources

Page 6
Next Step report, 2016, Queensland Department of Education and Training.

Page 21
Youth Justice Pocket stats 2015-16, DJAG, Child Protection Summary Statistics, Queensland 2015-16, DCCSDS.

Page 25
AIHW: Specialist homelessness services 2015-16 web report.

Page 31
Mission Australia, Youth Mental Health report Youth Survey 2012-2016.

Page 36

Page 46
Poverty in Australia 2016 Australian Council of Social Service.

Contact: www.qld.gov.au/youthengagementalliance
Tools and templates

The following governance and collaboration tools and templates might assist you in developing the resources you need to establish or enhance your multi-agency collaborative arrangements.

Examples of how to complete them follow. Digital formats of the tools and the templates are available wherever you see the tool download symbol.

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# DoE Regional Youth Engagement Hub

## Contact list

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DoE region</th>
<th>Contact details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan</td>
<td>Metro <a href="mailto:Pathways@qed.qld.gov.au">Pathways@qed.qld.gov.au</a>  &lt;br&gt; School Community Liaison Officers  ph (07) 3028 8166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td><a href="mailto:enquiries.SER@qed.qld.gov.au">enquiries.SER@qed.qld.gov.au</a>  &lt;br&gt; ph (07) 5656 6688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Queensland</td>
<td><a href="mailto:CQRET@qed.qld.gov.au">CQRET@qed.qld.gov.au</a>  &lt;br&gt; Kate Ingram  ph (07) 4932 4087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darling Downs and South West</td>
<td><a href="mailto:YouthEngagement.DDSW@qed.qld.gov.au">YouthEngagement.DDSW@qed.qld.gov.au</a>  &lt;br&gt; ph (07) 4616 7603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Coast</td>
<td><a href="mailto:northcoastregion@qed.qld.gov.au">northcoastregion@qed.qld.gov.au</a>  &lt;br&gt; ph (07) 3203 9000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Queensland</td>
<td><a href="mailto:studentservicesnqr@qed.qld.gov.au">studentservicesnqr@qed.qld.gov.au</a>  &lt;br&gt; ph (07) 4758 3222 (#2 State Schooling)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Far North Queensland</td>
<td><a href="mailto:fnqnes@qed.qld.gov.au">fnqnes@qed.qld.gov.au</a>  &lt;br&gt; ph (07) 4037 3822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Office</td>
<td><a href="mailto:youthengagement@qed.qld.gov.au">youthengagement@qed.qld.gov.au</a></td>
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</table>
Sample protocols for collaboration expectations

This office recognises the importance of cross-agency collaboration.

Our operating principles include the following:

- responding in a timely manner to queries from other agencies
- knowing who to talk to across agencies
- carefully considering opportunities for collaboration
- establishing appropriate and proportionate networks and partnerships
- using existing networks and partnerships
- establishing formal and informal networks (as appropriate) with other agencies
- ensuring cultural capability.
Sample protocol for cross-agency parent engagement

This office recognises the importance of parent engagement in cross-agency collaboration.

Our operating principles include the following:

- responding in a timely manner to queries from parents
- considering opportunities for parent inclusion in decision making
- identifying and addressing parental concerns
- establishing appropriate and proportionate engagement of parents
- sensitively managing parents whose involvement may not always be advantageous to the child or young person
- establishing formal and informal communication channels
- ensuring cultural capability.
Opportunities to collaborate checklist

Do I create opportunities to collaborate by:

☐ building and using relationship skills to work effectively across agencies?
☐ knowing who to talk to?
☐ setting a tone and making my expectations clear about collaboration with other agencies?
☐ establishing clear roles for officers in my division with respect to cross agency collaboration?
☐ engendering trust with key officers in other agencies?
☐ leveraging existing professional networks?
☐ considering formalising agreements?
☐ sharing information with other agencies where it will enhance services?
☐ considering shared performance metrics?
Considerations for a strategic policy approach

When considering a strategic policy approach, use the following questions as a guide to collaborative action.

Working collaboratively at the strategic level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the issue warrant a high-level, strategic response?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Are there opportunities to deliver more efficient and effective government services?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will a shared vision, commitment and approach deliver a better outcome?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are other agencies working with the same cohort of young people?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Will the initiative/policy impact on a young person’s participation in programs offered by other agencies?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do other agencies offer similar or complementary programs where synergies might be achieved?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there a high-level program in place that could be leveraged to deliver better outcomes?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are there legal barriers/enablers to consider?</td>
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</table>
Considerations for a case management approach

When considering a case-management approach, the following questions provide a guide to collaborative action when supporting young disengaged people.

If the young person is **not currently** in contact with an agency or receiving support:

- **Conduct** an initial assessment to determine the holistic needs of the young person and identify what services and supports are required
- **Assess** the risk to the young person and community to ascertain if an immediate or urgent intervention or support is required for the well-being of the young person
- **Take action** to address the immediate needs of the young person. Remember that there is no wrong door and that the needs of the young person are paramount

If a multi-agency response is required, contact the local or regional office of the relevant agencies and seek an initial stakeholder meeting. A program may already be in place in your local region that you can utilise

- Develop an individual case management plan (if appropriate) for the young person in consultation with the young person, their family (if appropriate), and all relevant agencies

If the young person is **already in contact** with other services, or has been referred to an agency:

- Seek the young person’s permission to contact their previous/existing case manager/s in each agency
- In consultation with the existing case manager, review the young person’s current situation to determine if additional services are required
- Contact the local or regional office of the relevant agencies and seek an initial meeting
- Update the young person’s case management plan in consultation with the young person, their family (if appropriate), and all relevant agencies

In consultation with the young person and other relevant agencies, identify which agency is best to act as the lead agency

- Continue to support the young person along their re-engagement pathway. Their needs will change over time and responses will need to be flexible and dynamic
- Don’t let go! Continue to work collaboratively until the baton is passed and the young person is successfully transitioned to education, training or employment
Visioning exercise

Ask each person to think ahead to a specific time (choose a timeframe to suit your situation for example six months, the next school year). Ask the stakeholder group to envision what the young person/community/educational outcomes will be like once the problem or issue is addressed. Participants should focus on the result, not the process for getting there.

Participants answer the questions individually, jotting down key phrases that describe their vision. Encourage participants to express their most idealistic, hopeful, and positive ideas. Avoid restricting thinking. The goal for participants is to share the outcome they want to achieve to help the group articulate a shared vision and work together to document that vision.
Guide to conducting stakeholder meetings

Stakeholder meetings are important mechanisms in developing a collaborative, multi-agency approach where a degree of formality is warranted. Initial meetings should be focused on establishing relationships and developing a shared vision.

The vision is critical as it helps clarify the purpose of a collaboration. It brings focus to the group by expressing the philosophy (values and beliefs), as well as purpose, of the collaboration, to which all partners agree. It can also help to identify other partners who may need to be at the table. A visioning meeting might include a short exercise to consider a point in the future where the issue has been successfully addressed.

Once an agreed vision has been established, the stakeholders should seek to develop a roadmap for action to take towards that vision. Be clear about the current reality and consider what strategies or approaches can be adopted to move forward. A program logic approach might be helpful. Members of the group who have been engaged in the process will feel ownership of the vision and are more likely to be committed to the process.

‘Getting the right people in the room’ has been quoted repeatedly as one of the key factors of a successful collaborative arrangement. The ‘right’ people are those who have the appropriate knowledge, expertise and commitment to the proposed outcome as well as decision-making power.

Agency representatives should have the responsibility and authority to take action on the ideas put forward at the meeting, or have the appropriate level of support from their agency to participate in good faith. Due to the complex nature of youth engagement, and the diverse range of responses that maybe required to address issues, the group is likely to contain a range of perspectives, opinions and knowledge. Participants should be given the imprimatur to respectfully and constructively challenge the purpose, approach or strategy.

Aim of cross-agency and stakeholder groups:

- Bringing together those who directly work with young people and their families
- Sharing information
- Reduction of service ‘splitting’
- Developing and implementing collaborative plans to best meet the needs of young people
- Delivery of tangible actions and outcomes that support young people and families
- Attempting within services’ capacity to fill ‘gaps’ and address barriers that prevent young people moving forward
- Supporting young people to effect positive change in key life domains.
Running a stakeholder meeting checklist

Prior to the meeting

☐ Determine who are the support agencies? What are the referral goals?
☐ Set a meeting date, time and venue - make an email distribution list of the support agencies
☐ Invite a representative from all support agencies to attend the stakeholder meeting. Use Outlook so that it is locked in people’s schedule
☐ Ensure you have a copy of the stakeholder meeting minutes template (or create one)

At the meeting

☐ Welcome all parties to the meeting and give a brief explanation of why you are meeting and what you hope to achieve (this may include reading out the above ‘aims of stakeholder groups’)
☐ Remind all parties of confidentiality agreements and legislative obligations before proceeding
☐ Establish a chair and minute taker and record attendees and apologies
☐ Proceed through the minutes template following the domains listed to ensure all of the young people’s needs are discussed and addressed.
☐ Give each agency an opportunity to provide an update and raise any concerns they have regarding the young person.
☐ Develop and record tangible actions to support the young person and identify who will be responsible for progressing them
☐ Make sure that all parties understand and agree to the actions
☐ Determine whether there are other support agencies who may need to attend the stakeholder meetings
☐ Remind all parties that emails regarding the client should be communicated between all stakeholders
☐ Set a date for the next meeting and agree on frequency of meetings (fortnightly or monthly depending on need and capacity)

Following the meeting

☐ Send a copy of the minutes to all stakeholders and agencies where confidentiality allows
☐ Follow up on any actions you have agreed to
☐ Continue to communicate with stakeholders between meetings as required
☐ Identify, communicate and address any issues or barriers faced by the stakeholder group

Confidentiality

All officers who come in to contact with confidential information, or who plan to share that information within the parameters of a stakeholder meeting must comply with all relevant legislation including the Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld). However, officers must not shy away from sharing confidential information, where it is legally allowed and for the benefit of the child or young person.
TORs are commonly prepared by groups to define and document the purpose and structure of agencies who agree to work together towards a shared goal. They are part of a formal governance structure that provides a basis for defining the project scope, managing risks and making decisions.

Sample templates for a small groups and for a reference group follow.
Terms of reference
Local working group

Purpose
The aim of the ___________________________ is to support young people and their families that are at high risk of disengagement from schooling to access coordinated support from Government Departments.

Scope
The ___________________________ will:

☑ Discuss in confidence the issues and needs of the young person

☑ Facilitate high-level discussion to be solutions focused and set direction to improve outcomes for students and their families.

☑ Provide a collaborative approach in supporting young people to re-engage in Education

Membership
Panel members are required to sign a confidentiality form which will allow them to actively participate and adherence to confidentially guidelines as a young person’s sensitive and confidential information is shared across panel members. Panel members are also required to declare any potential conflicts of interests when discussing students.

Chair___________________________

Members

• School officer/DoE
• Regional guidance officer
• Case manager
• Queensland Police Service
• Housing representative
• Child and Youth Mental Health representative
• Youth justice worker
• other

Co-opted members on invitation Young person and their family (where appropriate)

___________________________       ___________________________

Secretariat ___________________________
Roles and responsibilities of committee members

**Chair**
- set agenda
- collect referrals
- ensure the committee operates effectively and according to agreed committee protocols
- facilitates the flow of information during meetings
- inviting experts to advise the committee as required
- approve draft minutes for circulation to members
- set date claimers

**Members**
- promote the working group’s role as a forum for support and solutions focus
- represent an organisation or policy position or providing specific expertise
- report against their work relevant to the purpose of the group
- liaise with others to assist working group to fulfil its purpose
- share best practices
- follow up on actions assigned to members
- endorse minutes of each meeting within insert timeframe of their circulation by the secretariat
- bring relevant matters to the group for discussion
- contribute to the outcomes of the group through agreed actions
- maintain confidentiality of matters discussed and decisions formed by the group.

**Secretariat**
- compile and sending out agenda and briefing papers prior to the meeting
- circulate minutes to members for endorsement
- monitor and track actions arising from meetings

---

**Reporting and referral relationships**

**Referrals**
Referrals will come through once all school-based student support services processes have been explored. Students that have been referred will be required to complete a SSMH1 Parent Student Consent form (DoE) to ensure parent consent has been obtained prior to the meeting.

**Reporting**
The ___________________________ will:
- review the terms of reference and the operations, effectiveness and efficiencies of the working group for continuous improvement opportunities, once a year
- prepare a report on outcomes.

**Frequency and conduct of meetings**
Meetings will be held every _____ weeks at ________

**Review**
Purpose and terms of reference wil be reviewed ________
Terms of reference (TOR)

Multi-agency youth re-engagement working group

The following template provides a guide on how to create a multi-agency collaborative working group. Terms of reference (TOR) can be modified as needed to suit the specific needs of your group.

Prompts to {insert} information are included throughout the document. If the section is not relevant, or does not meet your needs, simply adjust or delete as necessary.

It is a good idea to prepare the TOR in consultation with group members. Once finalised, it should be circulated to members and be included in any materials that is given to new group members.

1. Background/context

This section may include

- Background and rationale for the group's formation and objectives, including the following:
  - A brief discussion of the issue(s) that the group is addressing in the context of the community.
  - Key drivers and motivators for the group's formation, such as recognized gaps in existing programs or services.
  - Any other information that may be of use to working group members.

2. Roles and functions of the

Multi-agency youth re-engagement working group

The 

[Insert organisation name] multi-agency youth re-engagement working group will:

- Advise on and advocate for youth re-engagement programs and strategies
- Provide advice, support and assistance in the implementation of programs
- Monitor identified and emerging risks and advise on their prevention, mitigation and management
- Recognize barriers and enablers to collaboration, and assist in developing innovative approaches to address these
- Identify re-engagement and educational needs
- Monitor the program's budget and expenditure
- Insert any additional roles as necessary

[Insert organisation logo here]

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1. Background/context

This section may include:

- background information on the scope and benefits of youth re-engagement programs. Useful background material might include the following:
  - Evidence based information about the issue including statistics regarding the individual/local/regional situation.
  - Information about what programs and services are offered in the area and by which departments.
  - Cite examples of other collaborative arrangements that could be adapted and modified to reduce risk factors and achieve a positive outcome.
- a brief discussion on the issue being faced and the goals of the group.
- a brief discussion on the key driver(s) for program development and implementation i.e. risk to the individual/cohort/community, recent changes, budget allocations, increased priority focus, etc.
- any other information that may be of use to working group members.

2. Roles and functions of the

Multi-agency youth re-engagement working group

The [insert organisation name] multi-agency youth re-engagement working group will:

- provide strategic leadership in the development and implementation of re-engagement programs and strategies
- provide advice, support and assistance in the implementation of the program
- monitor identified and emerging risks and advise on their prevention, mitigation and management
- recognise barriers and enablers to collaboration, and assist in developing innovative approaches to address these
- identify re-engagement and educational needs
- monitor trends in the initiative [insert organisation name]
- monitor the program budget and expenditure
- insert any additional roles/functions as necessary.
3. Role of individual group members

Individual members of the [insert organisation name] multi-agency youth re-engagement working group are expected to: (Delete as appropriate)

- attend regular meetings and actively participate in the group’s work
- respect the expertise and diversity of input from all [insert organisation name] members
- take a genuine interest in the initiatives and the outcomes being pursued by the group
- be an advocate for the young person’s outcomes
- be committed to, and actively involved in, pursuing the program’s outcomes
- insert any additional roles as necessary.

4. General

4.1 Membership

The [insert organisation name] Multi-agency youth re-engagement working group shall be comprised of:

- list names of group members, including their titles, if necessary

Other members may be included in the group as required.

4.2 Chair/Convenor

The group will be chaired by [insert name/title of group chair]. Meetings will be convened by the chair and supported by the coordinator [insert name/title of group coordinator].

4.3 Agenda items

All agenda items will be forwarded to the coordinator by close of business [insert number of working days prior to the next scheduled meeting]. (Adjust amount as appropriate)

The agenda, with attached meeting papers, will be distributed at least five working days prior to the next scheduled meeting. (Adjust amount as appropriate)

4.4 Minutes and meeting papers

The minutes of each [insert organisation name] multi-agency youth re-engagement working group meeting will be prepared by [insert name here].

Full copies of the minutes, including attachments, will be provided to all [insert organisation name] multi-agency youth re-engagement working group members no later than five working days following each meeting. (Adjust amount as appropriate)

By agreement of the group, out-of-session decisions will be deemed acceptable. Where agreed, all out-of-session decisions will be recorded in the minutes of the next scheduled meeting. (Delete or adjust as appropriate)

4.5 Frequency of meetings

The [insert organisation name] multi-agency youth re-engagement working group will meet [insert agreed frequency].

4.6 Proxies to meetings

(Delete statements as appropriate)

Members of the [insert organisation name] multi-agency youth re-engagement working group will nominate a proxy to attend a meeting if the member is unable to attend.

The chair will be informed of the substitution at least five working days prior to the scheduled nominated meeting. (Adjust amount as appropriate)

The nominated proxy will provide relevant comments/feedback about the attended meeting to the [insert organisation name] multi-agency youth re-engagement working group working group member they are representing.

4.7 Quorum requirements

A quorum will be half the regular membership plus one. (Adjust as necessary)

4.8 Review

The effectiveness and membership of the [insert organisation name] multi-agency youth re-engagement working group will be reviewed after [x] months.
Partnership agreement

An inter-agency partnership agreement records the agreed terms and conditions of collaboration between separate agencies. The agreement outlines the basis of the relationship and the agreed objectives between partners. They may be broad, high-level documents developed at state, regional or local levels, or a simple agreement between agencies about a specific program of work.

The purpose of an inter-agency agreement can vary, for example the purpose may be to:

- maintain consistency of inter-agency relationships and practices
- explicitly state what agencies and/or sectors have committed to
- clarify roles and responsibilities
- provide a basis for coordinated responses to a situation.

Inter-agency agreements usually cover a standard format and include a set of principles. For example:

- focus on client outcomes
- open communication
- cooperation
- consistency of process
- efficiency of processes
- decision making processes
- transparency and accountability, and
- keeping stakeholders informed.

In developing your own inter-agency agreement, the following questions should be considered:

- what is the need for and purpose of establishing a protocol?
- are there existing protocols that could be adapted for use?
- which agencies should be involved?
- is there preliminary support from inter-agency participants?
- is an initial inter-agency meeting required to discuss key elements to be included in the partnership agreement (see template for a guide)?
- Is there a shared commitment to working together?
- Is a relevant working group with cross-agency representation already in place?
- Is there a process for regular monitoring and continual review?
- Has supporting documentation been prepared? ie Parental permission/Confidentiality agreement/Declaration of conflict of interest.

Please note that your agency practice may require consideration by a legal team prior to forming a partnership agreement with other agencies.
Partnership agreement

between
_________________________________________ and ______________________________________

_________________________________________
Date

Partnership overview: Provide broad statements of what partners want to achieve. A work plan can be attached as an appendix to the agreement.

_______________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________

Objective: By ___/___/_____ we hope to have a potential increase of number young people successfully engaged in the program or transitioning into further education or employment.

Partnership duration: This partnership will commence ___/___/_____ and will be reviewed annually.

Partners:
Organisation: ________________________________
Key contact and contact details: ________________________________

Working together – guiding principles
We agree to follow these principles while working together

☑ Respecting the opinions and viewpoints of other partners at all times
☑ Creating and maintaining equity amongst the partners
☑ Being proactive and supportive of all partners
☑ Looking for opportunities
☑ Maintaining open and transparent communication pathways
☑ Partners are committed to continuous improvement of the program throughout its duration
☑ Young person’s feedback provided to help inform all program reviews
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key issue</th>
<th>Agreed protocol</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Governance</strong></td>
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<td>Decision making</td>
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</table>
| **Roles and responsibilities** | **Taskforce team members:**  
|                 | • Identify local issues, design and brief projects in response to the issue        |
| **Project manager:** | • lead the work of taskforce members                                                 |
|                 | • present briefs to the executive sub-committee                                   |
|                 | • manage the preparation of reports and present to the executive sub-committee     |
|                 | • seek assistance from members of the executive sub-committee for any presenting critical issues/barriers to the work |
| **Executive sub-committee** | • authorise the briefs (work)                                                  |
| **Media communication** |                                                |
| **Confidentiality** |                                                |
| **Partner exit and entry** |                                                |
| **Dispute resolution** |                                                |
| **Monitoring and evaluation** |                                                |
| **Resourcing**   |                                                |

**Timeline+**  
**Key milestones**

**Evaluation of the partnership**

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

**Signed by:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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How to fill out a partnership agreement

Partnership agreement

between

and

Date

Partnership overview: Provide broad statements of what partners want to achieve. A work plan can be attached as an appendix to the agreement.

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Working together – guiding principles

We agree to follow these principles while working together:

- Respecting the opinions and viewpoints of other partners at all times
- Creating and maintaining equity amongst the partners
- Being proactive and supportive of all partners
- Looking for opportunities
- Maintaining open and transparent communication pathways
- Partners are committed to continuous improvement of the program throughout its duration
- Young person’s feedback provided to help inform all program review

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Briefly describe the reason, philosophical basis and desired results for the collaboration addressed in this agreement, such as to achieve a shared vision, provide high quality services to children and families, maximize resources, meet community needs, deliver educational outcomes etc.

Identify when the agreement will take effect and when reconsideration of the agreement will take place.

List agencies signing the agreement and briefly summarize each agency’s mission. For each participating agency, indicate by position title, the contact person responsible for decision-making and problem solving related to the collaboration agreement or their designee.

Describe principles that guide the relationships and work of the collaboration.
Partnership agreement

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<tr>
<td>Timeline+</td>
<td>Key milestones</td>
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</table>

Describe how participating agencies will make decisions, how representatives will meet to coordinate activities and resolve issues.

Describe staff, facility, and/or in-kind commitments.

Delineate the schedule and process for evaluating the outcomes and impact of the collaboration, including how this information will be used for program improvement.

Consider seeking legal advice prior to finalising the agreement.

For each participating agency, provide that agency head’s or designee’s signature.

Signed by:

Name: ____________________
Position: ____________________
Signed: ____________________
Date: ____________________
Confidentiality agreement

All officers are expected to work within the bounds of relevant legislation, including laws to protect privacy. The Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service (2.3 Work as an integrated service) states,

"We have a responsibility, where appropriate and in accordance with our official duties, to share information across Queensland public service agencies, where permitted by law, to enhance the seamless delivery of services."

A confidentiality agreement is a legally binding contract used for the purposes of sharing information about young people in order to effectively plan and respond to their needs. In particular, child safety legislative protections must be adhered to. If confidential information is disclosed to another person under a confidentiality agreement, they are required to keep that information confidential, and not misuse it.

While this template is used in some locations, its use is optional.
Confidentiality agreement

One of the main aims of the ____________________________

is to assist high-risk young people and their families to access support from departments that include

______________________________

With the young person’s written consent, sensitive and confidential information will be shared across panel members. Panel members active participation and adherence to confidentially guidelines is essential.

Representative: __________________________________________

Department/agency: ________________________________________

I _______________________________________ agree to adhere to confidentially guidelines which apply to the

______________________________

I understand that the use and sharing of client information is for authorised purposes under the

______________________________

Signature: __________________________________________ Date: ______________

Witness signature: ______________________________________ Date: ______________

Witness name: __________________________________________

Contact phone: _________________________________________

Contact email: _________________________________________

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The Queensland Youth Strategy, launched by DCSYW in May 2017, is a complementary resource that provides an opportunity to work better together across agencies to deliver services to young people.

The many successes of inter-agency collaboration throughout Queensland are acknowledged and celebrated. The Youth Engagement Alliance hopes this guide will empower staff to work collegiately, to innovate, and to achieve optimal success. Best practice and innovative approaches are highlighted to inspire staff to work collaboratively with a shared purpose of setting each young person on a path to educational and employment success.