



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, AGEING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES  
Ms Bec Cody MLA (Chair), Mrs Vicki Dunne MLA (Deputy Chair)  
Ms Caroline Le Couteur MLA

## Submission Cover Sheet

### Inquiry into Child and Youth Protection Services (Part 2)

Information Sharing under the Care and Protection System

**Submission Number: 3**

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**Submission:**

**Inquiry into Child and Youth Protection  
Services**

**August 2019**

# About ACTCOSS

ACTCOSS acknowledges Canberra has been built on the land of the Ngunnawal people. We pay respects to their Elders and recognise the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and ongoing contribution to the ACT community.

The ACT Council of Social Service Inc. (ACTCOSS) represents not-for-profit community organisations and advocates for social justice in the ACT.

ACTCOSS is a member of the nationwide COSS Network, made up of each of the state and territory Councils and the national body, the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS).

ACTCOSS' vision is for Canberra to be a just, safe and sustainable community in which everyone has the opportunity for self-determination and a fair share of resources and services.

The membership of the Council includes the majority of community-based service providers in the social welfare area, a range of community associations and networks, self-help and consumer groups and interested individuals.

ACTCOSS advises that this document may be publicly distributed, including by placing a copy on our website.

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## Acronyms

ACTCOSS	ACT Council of Social Service Inc.
CYPS	Child and Youth Protection Services
OOHC	out-of-home care
AFI	Advocacy for Inclusion
ACAT	ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal

## Introduction

The ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) has made a submission to the Inquiry into Child and Youth Protection Services as it is of significant interest to several of our members and the wider Canberra community. ACTCOSS members working with children, young people and families who encounter child and youth protection services (CYPS) have been actively engaged in discussions on systems reform. Child protection responses critically inform and influence a range of important life outcomes for young people and at-risk families.

ACTCOSS sees improved administration and confidence in CYPS systems will be achieved by implementing a restorative response and approach that reduces a bias towards removal of children at-risk. We seek a child protection system that is transparent, accountable, human rights compliant, and works in collaboration with the community members it seeks to protect.

ACTCOSS will not be commenting on the individual case of CP v Director-General of Community Services Directorate. However, we welcome the opportunity to identify to the Committee systemic CYPS issues that have been highlighted as undermining the effectiveness of and community confidence in our child protection system. Currently, ACTCOSS sees that the most pressing systemic issues are a lack of transparency and accountability, and we suggest a set of recommendations to address these issues. In addition, ACTCOSS has identified that moving towards a culture within CYPS that values restorative practice is key to improving community confidence, transparency and accountability, and establishing a more person-oriented child protection system.

ACTCOSS notes that the recommendations below, and any other recommendations arising from this Inquiry, must be implemented collaboratively with families, children and young people affected by the child protection system. Lived experience is important on this matter, particularly as our research on this issue has identified that many complainants and clients of CYPS struggle to make their voices heard. In particular, we urge collaboration with CREATE, who have done useful work highlighting the experiences and voices of children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC).

## Recommendations

- Improve the CYPS communication style with parents, carers, children and young people, by providing support for clients to communicate effectively with child protection workers; improving accessibility of communication such as plain-English resources; and providing more clarity over decisions.
- Increase the use of family case conferencing.
- Institute an external review model through the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT), ensuring potential ACAT Members for CYPS decisions are properly trained.
- Revise CYPS policy and practices to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles are explicitly designed into policy and practice.
- Provide ongoing training to CYPS staff on unconscious bias.
- Move towards a restorative practice approach throughout CYPS and embedding restorative practices in workforces that interact with the system, including police and education. Actions include the increase of early support that works with families, particularly Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families; implementing restorative practices in removal practices; and offering a large-scale training in restorative practices across the workforce.

This submission is based on feedback from:

- Advocacy for Inclusion
- ACT Human Rights Commission
- Canberra Restorative Community Network
- Women's Centre for Health Matters
- ACT Law Society
- CREATE Foundation
- Youth Coalition of the ACT
- Families ACT
- St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn
- Kym Duggan, Social Justice and Advocacy Adviser, St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn
- Legal Aid ACT.

We have also incorporated information gained through our consultations for our submission to the Consultation on Adoption Reform – dispensing with parental consent.

## Community confidence

### Transparency

A key systemic issue ACTCOSS has identified is the lack of transparency in the child protection system, particularly in relation to communication with families, carers, children and young people.

Responding to the issue of transparency is essential to ensuring community confidence in CYPS. ACTCOSS understands that child protection workers have difficult jobs dealing with sensitive information and a high level of risk. Being tasked with the role of ensuring the safety of children and young people is significant. Nevertheless, organisations who advocate for families, children and young people involved with CYPS have noted to us that current opaque processes do not support family restoration, permanency, or trauma-informed practice; each of these is a stated principle of CYPS.

As noted in Glanfield's *Report of the Inquiry: Review into the System Level Responses to Family Violence in the ACT* (the Glanfield report):

CYPS must adopt a culture of transparency and engagement with clients, agencies and service providers to inform improved decision making and to engage more effectively with those who provide services to families who come to the notice of CYPS.<sup>1</sup>

To increase transparency and community confidence, ACTCOSS recommends that CYPS investigate improving or reforming activities or practices in two areas:

### **Communication with parents, carers, children and young people**

ACTCOSS has spoken to organisations who work with people in contact with CYPS, who note that the system can be difficult to communicate with, compromising the transparency of the process of decision making for their clients. As CREATE noted in their submission on the Review of Child Protection Decisions in the ACT, “accessing formal decision-review processes can involve complicated, structured, and overly formal processes that potentially alienate both young people and their advocates”.<sup>2</sup> ACTCOSS has also heard from one organisation assisting women who deal with CYPS, who said that there is inadequate support for women to interact with child protection workers in a way

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1 L Glanfield, *Report of the Inquiry: Review into the System Level Responses to Family Violence in the ACT*, ACT Government, April 2016, p.78.

2 CREATE Foundation, *Submission on the Review of Child Protection Decisions in the ACT*, CREATE Foundation, June 2019, p.4.

that matches the communication style of CYPS. This difficulty in communication style can exacerbate the trauma of trying to regain care of their children.

Advocacy for Inclusion (AFI) emphasise a lack of transparency,

We support AFI's recommendation that CYPS work to ensure an increased accessibility of information provided to families.

This opaque communication style can also influence a lack of clarity over decisions. Some organisations working with people who encounter CYPS state that their clients feel uninformed about why a decision has been made.<sup>5</sup> As noted by the ACT Human Rights Commission, some of the complaints they receive relate to a complainant seeking a review where decisions "appear to prioritise early decisions and permanency over support and restoration".<sup>6</sup> The Commission note that the rationale behind a decision is often unclear, including whether the longer-term benefits of a kinship placement were considered, or whether input was sought from community members of staff with relevant "cultural expertise".<sup>7</sup>

CREATE echo this sentiment. They note that there is a significantly greater need to ensure that children and young people are provided with:

sufficient, developmentally appropriate information... young people must have information as to why certain outcomes have been decided within the timeframes, how these are sensitive to the needs of the individual young person, and presented in a way that they can understand.<sup>8</sup>

ACTCOSS affirms CREATE's recommendation that the CYPS principle of trauma-informed practice should extend to the decision-making process, where applying a "trauma-informed understanding to any decision review process, with supporting policy and practice documents, would also ensure that processes of inclusion, open communication, transparency and accountability are enhanced".<sup>9</sup>

### **Case conferencing**

Case conferencing is a useful mechanism to increase the transparency of the child protection system as it brings families into the otherwise formal decision-

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5 ACT Law Reform Advisory Council, *Canberra – becoming a restorative city: Progress Report on community ideas from preliminary consultation*, ACT Law Reform Advisory Council, December 2017, p.13.

6 ACT Human Rights Commission, *Response to the Discussion Paper – 'Review of child protection decisions in the ACT'*, ACT Human Rights Commission, 2019, p.8.

7 *ibid.*

8 CREATE Foundation, *Submission on the Review of Child Protection Decisions in the ACT*, CREATE Foundation, June 2019, p.3.

9 *ibid.*, p.4.

making process. ACTCOSS urges CYPS to consider increasing the use of conferencing, as an “empowering, participatory and proven practice model”<sup>10</sup> that enhances the participation and inclusion of the system.

We note the Glanfield report’s recommendation that CYPS increase the use of case conferencing, to ensure decision making is “more fully informed and is done on a transparent and collaborative basis with government, non-government agencies and families”.<sup>11</sup>

However, in increasing conferencing, we caution that placements arising from this process should not result in less support provided to carers, than which is offered through formal placement. The ACT Human Rights Commission notes:

vulnerable families should not be placed in a position of having to decide between using restorative family group conference practices on the one hand, and having placements within the extended family or kinship group adequately financially supported after formal intervention by CYPS on the other hand.<sup>12</sup>

## Accountability

ACTCOSS is pleased to see that effective scrutiny and accountability in decision making are mentioned in the Terms of Reference of this Inquiry. In particular, we emphasise the importance of implementing recommendations from the Glanfield report. ACTCOSS believes it is fundamental that there is an external review process for all CYPS decisions, as recommended by Glanfield:

A review should be undertaken of what decisions made by CYPS should be subject to either internal or external merits review... Merits review is where a new decision maker makes a fresh decision on the merits of the case trying to ensure the decision is fair and reasonable. Certain decisions set out in section 839 of the Children and Young People Act 2008 (CYP Act) such as refusal to approve a residential care organisation, refusal to authorise a person as a kinship carer or as an approved carer can be reviewed by the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT). Certain other important decisions that are not merits reviewable (i.e. reviewable by ACAT) in the ACT, are merits reviewable in other jurisdictions such as Victoria and Queensland.<sup>13</sup>

As provided for by the *Children and Young People Act 2008* (ACT), the Director-General of the CYPS can apply for a care and protection order through the Children’s Court, which the Court may issue after reviewing the Director-

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10 M Ivec and F Tito Wheatland, *Moving to a restorative and relationally based child protection system in the ACT*, Australian National University, June 2014, p.2.

11 L Glanfield, *Report of the Inquiry: Review into the System Level Responses to Family Violence in the ACT*, ACT Government, April 2016, p.93.

12 ACT Human Rights Commission, *Response to the Discussion Paper – ‘Review of child protection decisions in the ACT’*, ACT Human Rights Commission, 2019, p.9.

13 L Glanfield, *Report of the Inquiry: Review into the System Level Responses to Family Violence in the ACT*, ACT Government, April 2016, p.74.

General's care plan.<sup>14</sup> This plan can contain life-altering decisions about a child's long-term care, but the Act does not compel the Director-General to comply with the care plan, which can be changed by officers within CYPS.

Section 839 of the Act sets out what decisions are reviewable. It outlines that decisions such as refusals to approve a person as an approved carer, or to renew a person as an approved carer, are reviewable decisions. However, as noted by Legal Aid ACT<sup>15</sup> and the ACT Law Society<sup>16</sup> this list is incomplete and does not include important decisions impacting a child's life, including:

- Where the child will live
- Who a child can have contact with
- Decisions about the education and training of the child.

The lack of transparency around these life-changing decisions is unacceptable, particularly considering the ongoing concerns that current internal review mechanisms are insufficient.<sup>17</sup> As noted by the Our Booris Our Way Steering Committee, "there are many decisions that cannot be appealed that have significant impact on our families".<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the ACT Human Rights Commission note that an external review mechanism is important to address community concerns about bias or systemic discrimination.<sup>19</sup> An external review mechanism would ensure accountability for many decisions that are not currently available for review.

ACTCOSS emphasises the ACT Law Society's point that, on the issue of an external review:

It is common sense and also respect for due process, that a decision that is made internally by an organisation, such as CYPS, should be open to review by external measures.<sup>20</sup>

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14 Legal Aid ACT, *Submission on Review of Systemic Responses to Family Violence in the ACT*, Legal Aid ACT, 2016, pp.2-3.

15 *ibid.*

16 ACT Law Society Family Violence and Children's Committee, *Submissions prepared by the ACT Family Violence and Children's Committee on the Discussion Paper prepared by the Justice and Community Safety Directorate (in consultation with the Community Services Directorate) dated April 2019 regarding Review of Child Protection Decisions in the ACT*, ACT Law Society, 2019, pp.2-3.

17 See: CREATE Foundation, *Submission on the Review of Child Protection Decisions in the ACT*, CREATE Foundation, June 2019, pp.4-5; ACT Law Society Family Violence and Children's Committee, *Submissions prepared by the ACT Family Violence and Children's Committee on the Discussion Paper prepared by the Justice and Community Safety Directorate (in consultation with the Community Services Directorate) dated April 2019 regarding Review of Child Protection Decisions in the ACT*, ACT Law Society, 2019, p.2.

18 Our Booris Our Way Steering Committee, *Communique #14*, Our Booris Our Way, May 2019, viewed 25 August 2019, <[https://www.strongfamilies.act.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/1364677/Communique-Our-Booris-Our-Way-14.pdf](https://www.strongfamilies.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1364677/Communique-Our-Booris-Our-Way-14.pdf)>.

19 ACT Human Rights Commission, *Response to the Discussion Paper – 'Review of child protection decisions in the ACT'*, ACT Human Rights Commission, 2019, p.8.

20 ACT Law Society Family Violence and Children's Committee, *Submissions prepared by the ACT Family Violence and Children's Committee on the Discussion Paper prepared by the Justice and*

## External review model

ACTCOSS agrees with the ACT Law Society's recommendation that the ACT institute an external review model like the mechanism in Queensland.<sup>21</sup> The ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal would offer appropriate external review, given its existing powers. This option would also be timelier than establishing a new review panel.

We also highlight that the Queensland system has a fundamental principle that caring for children will be a shared responsibility across government agencies, service providers, communities, businesses and industry.<sup>22</sup> This commitment adds an important layer of accountability and expresses that child protection is everyone's responsibility.

However, the current process of going before ACAT can be difficult for some complainants, and there are several ways it could be strengthened to ensure it can act as a robust external review mechanism for families and children. ACTCOSS notes that:

- People going before ACAT need more appropriate supports to navigate the process. AFI noted to ACTCOSS that people with a disability have experienced frustration going before ACAT due to the inaccessibility of the supporting documents, and ACAT members engaging and communicating poorly with people with disabilities. ACTCOSS notes that advocacy organisations that assist people to go before ACAT will need additional funding to support ACAT processes
- Proper training must be given to potential ACAT Members who could oversee CYPs cases. As mentioned by the ACT Law Society, potential ACAT Members overseeing cases for external review should be offered training on child protection matters.<sup>23</sup>
- CREATE has said that ACAT requires amendments to ensure proper communication with children and young people to enable their full and informed participation.<sup>24</sup> This includes providing children and young people with information (verbally and in writing) that can be easily understood and without jargon; and ensuring young people are not disadvantaged if they do not have access to a phone or the internet to

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*Community Safety Directorate (in consultation with the Community Services Directorate) dated April 2019 regarding Review of Child Protection Decisions in the ACT*, ACT Law Society, 2019, p.4.

21 *ibid*, p.5.

22 Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, *Sharing responsibility for children's safety and wellbeing*, Queensland Government, viewed 26 August 2019, <<https://www.csyw.qld.gov.au/child-family/child-family-reform/sharing-responsibility-childrens-safety-wellbeing>>.

23 ACT Law Society Family Violence and Children's Committee, *Submissions prepared by the ACT Family Violence and Children's Committee on the Discussion Paper prepared by the Justice and Community Safety Directorate (in consultation with the Community Services Directorate) dated April 2019 regarding Review of Child Protection Decisions in the ACT*, ACT Law Society, 2019, p.4.

24 CREATE Foundation, *Submission on the Review of Child Protection Decisions in the ACT*, CREATE Foundation, June 2019, p.7.

initiate a review, or literacy skills. ACAT should use child-friendly language and diverse methods to distribute information.<sup>25</sup>

## Biases

As identified in our submission to the Consultation on Adoption Reform – dispensing with parental consent, there are several population groups in the ACT that are at greater risk of adverse experiences with CYPS. Due to overrepresentation within the child protection system, risks of stigma and discrimination, lack of trust in the service system, and a lack of support, there are certain families, children and young people who will experience greater harm from an opaque child protection system without appropriate accountability mechanisms. These include:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- Children and young people with incarcerated parents
- Children and young people with parents with a disability.

## Cultural bias

Cultural bias is a significant systemic issue within the child protection system. Of note and concern is the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care in the ACT in the last 10 years. That rate has increased from 33.1/1000 children in 2008-9 to 90.1/1000 in 2016-17.<sup>26</sup> The increase in the actual numbers of children in out of home care in the ACT was from 81 in 2007-8 to 227 in 2016-17.<sup>27</sup>

ACTCOSS endorses and draws the Committee's attention to the recommendation put forth by the Our Booris Our Way Steering Committee in August 2018:

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25 *ibid.*

26 Productivity Commission, *Report on Government Services 2018* Chapter 16 Child Protection Services @ table 16A.2.

27 *ibid.*

### **Our Booris Our Way Recommendation 3: Revision of Policy and Practice**

That Child and Youth Protection Services (CYPS) immediately commence revision of policy and practices to ensure that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles are explicitly designed into policy and practice. Children must be valued in a process that holds cultural rights as central to their identity and safety. We believe that this will hold children as central and valued within the child protection process and demonstrate closer alignment to our cultural rights as described in the ACT Human Rights Act 2004 [Section 27 (2)]. We note that Minister Stephen-Smith has already signed up to the Family Matters commitment which includes the application and implementation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (September 2017).<sup>28</sup>

In addition, ACTCOSS affirms the following system improvements suggested by the ACT Human Rights Commission:

Other improvements to the system include the need to provide ongoing training to CYPS staff on culture and unconscious bias. More funding should also be provided to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to provide early support to families. Further, we believe there should be consideration of clearer requirements for CSD to consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have an interest in the wellbeing of a child or young person through kinship, family and cultural ties.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, we note that in 2016 the Glanfield report also highlighted the ongoing issue of cultural bias in CYPS, stating that CSD “should continue to review its recruitment practices and cultural awareness training programs and ensure appropriate quality control in decision making to reduce unintended bias”.<sup>30</sup>

## **Restorative approach**

Through our consultation on this issue, ACTCOSS has identified that in addition to specific transparency and accountability measures and mechanisms that can be introduced to increase community confidence in CYPS, there is ongoing community concern about the operating culture. Specifically, that improvements in outcomes for people in contact with CYPS require a paradigm shift to facilitate a more restorative child protective system.

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28 Our Booris Our Way Steering Committee, *Interim Report*, August 2018, Canberra, Our Booris Our Way Steering Committee, p.3.

29 H Watchirs, J Griffiths-Cook, K Toohey, H Yates, *Transparency needed about care and protection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children*, Canberra Times, May 2019, viewed 25 August 2019, <<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6113090/transparency-needed-about-care-and-protection-of-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-children/>>.

30 L Glanfield, *Report of the Inquiry: Review into the System Level Responses to Family Violence in the ACT*, ACT Government, April 2016, p.78.

It is important to consider the overall culture of child protection in the ACT alongside the recommendations as suggested above. As CREATE note in their recommendation of an external review mechanism:

we are cautious to ensure that we are not simply creating another level of bureaucracy... any new mechanism [must add] value to the outcomes sought for, and by, children and young people in OOHC, and ensures that children and young people's views, needs, and wishes are at the centre of services and systems.<sup>31</sup>

The current formal bureaucratic structure of CYPS does not facilitate this aim, and that there must be a concerted effort to moving towards a restorative child protection system, in line with the goal of Canberra becoming a Restorative City.

## What does a restorative child protection system look like?

The ACT Law Reform Advisory Council identifies that a common restorative framework for the ACT could include the following common components:

- Certainty about government decisions being made through processes which comply with natural justice
- Transparent decision-making (such as reviewable written reasons for decisions)
- External review, with early access to restorative mediation
- Complaints and concerns have the opportunity for restorative resolution.<sup>32</sup>

In the specific context of CYPS, restorative practice in policy and procedure “describes reaching an outcome in a restorative way. A ‘restorative outcome’ is one reached in ways that are collaborative, transparent and accountable”.<sup>33</sup> Restorative child protection does not mean always restoring a family unit.<sup>34</sup>

Restorative child protection practices have informed the recommendations mentioned above. For example, an external review mechanism is a restorative practice as it allows affected people to state their concerns before an independent body. Our recommendation of more family group conferencing is also a restorative process as it allows for collaborative decision making. As outlined below, there are additional actions that CYPS could take to move towards a restorative child protection system.

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31 CREATE Foundation, *Submission on the Review of Child Protection Decisions in the ACT*, CREATE Foundation, June 2019, p.10.

32 F Tito Wheatland, *Bright Ideas – from people, places and research: Canberra on the journey to become a restorative city*, ACT Law Reform Advisory Council, 2018, pp.19-24.

33 *ibid*, p.15.

34 *ibid*.

## Removal practices

As noted in our submission to the Adoption Reform consultation – dispensing with parental consent, ACTCOSS has heard concerning accounts of families at risk of unnecessary removal of children and young people due to discrimination and lack of support within the child protection system.<sup>35</sup> This is affirmed by Tito Wheatland and Ivec, who note that in some cases, families with support needs come to the attention of CYPS and are met with an adversarial system, rather than a restorative approach that seeks to address these needs.<sup>36</sup> As an alternative to this process, Tito Wheatland and Ivec identify the following tri-level restorative practice process:

1. Participation and inclusion. This requires child protection to work together with families, children and young people, and carers.
2. Effective communication, listening, respecting rights, shared decision-making for solutions. This requires child protection to commit to involving all parties in the last-resort decision to remove a child.
3. Sustained support and time to change.<sup>37</sup>

## Case Study: Leeds City Council ‘Family Valued’ program

As part of its commitment to becoming a Restorative City, Leeds City Council introduced a system change program, ‘Family Valued’. The program is a large-scale approach to embedding restorative practice as the default approach to child protection. It was guided by the following theory of change:

Children live in families, families create communities and communities create cities, so by investing in strong and stable families we can create the conditions for a more successful city. An important part of doing this is ensuring that when families are experiencing difficulties and a child within the family is vulnerable, the support that is put in place works with the family to find sustainable solutions and empowers that family to find the strength to change.<sup>38</sup>

There were three core activities:

- Awareness Raising and Deep Dive training to embed restorative practice across the workforce for children, families and communities;
- Expansion of Family Group Conferences to more families including those affected by domestic violence; and

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35 ACTCOSS, *Submission: Consultation on Adoption Reform: dispensing with parental consent*, ACTCOSS, April 2019, pp.8-11.

36 M Ivec and F Tito Wheatland, *Moving to a restorative and relationally based child protection system in the ACT*, Australian National University, June 2014, p.1.

37 M Ivec and F Tito Wheatland, *Moving to a restorative and relationally based child protection system in the ACT*, Australian National University, June 2014, p.2.

38 Leeds City Council, *One minute guide: Family Valued – Innovation programme*, Leeds City Council, 2015, viewed 26 August 2019, <<https://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/98%20-%20Family%20Valued.pdf>>.

- Newly commissioned services to address gaps in provision for families.<sup>39</sup>

In an evaluation of Family Valued, it was found that the restorative practice training reached 5913 attendees and 1392 Deep Dive attendees, including employees from outside Leeds City Council children’s services, such as Schools, Housing, and Police.<sup>40</sup> The evaluation noted qualitative evidence of “cultural change”, as it produced a common language and approach across the difference partners and participants in the training.<sup>41</sup>

More specifically, Family Valued was found to have embedded restorative practice in social work, resulting in “more open, harmonious and skilled social work practitioners and teams”.<sup>42</sup> 180 social workers participated in a Deep Dive training, to ‘widen’ and ‘deepen’ restorative practice.<sup>43</sup> The evaluation impact analysis found statistically significant reductions in number of looked after children; number of child protection plans; and number of children in need.<sup>44</sup>

**“Recommendations for local authorities considering restorative practice” from the *Family Valued Evaluation Summary***

- Effective restorative practice outside individual services requires wider system change that is led effectively
- Family group conferences are an effective rights-based process for empowering families with a range of needs, which can increase the likelihood of children remaining in the care of birth family networks. They can be used to address families’ problems early as well as within statutory child protection
- Social work can be restorative practice that delivers improved outcomes. To achieve this requires a systemic approach from restorative leadership to front line practice<sup>45</sup>

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39 ICF, *Family Valued Evaluation Summary*, ICF, 2016, viewed 25 August 2019, <<https://innovationcsc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/1.2.50-Family-Valued-Leeds-Evaluation-Summary.pdf>>.

40 *ibid.*

41 *ibid.*

42 *ibid.*

43 *ibid.*

44 *ibid.*

45 *ibid.*