

2 November Domestic and Family Violence Forum

On 2 November 2015 Homelessness NSW and Domestic Violence NSW facilitated a forum with approximately 80 people (from around 40 services) working in Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) delivering domestic and family violence (DFV) services throughout NSW. Participants attended from large NGOs such as Mission Australia and St Vincent de Paul to small specialist services such as Aboriginal Women and Children's Crisis Service and Moving Forward.

The purpose of the day was to bring NSW services together to discuss common themes for future advocacy with state and federal government for the domestic and family violence service system.

During the day, five key issues were clearly identified by participants as priorities:

1. Adequate long term funding for specialist DFV services (including women's refuges) and specialist responses within mainstream services. Resource allocation must be transparent in its distribution and allocation and linked to outcome measures based on best practice prioritising the safety and recovery of survivors of DFV. This will require a significant investment from both Federal and NSW Governments in order to meet current and future demand for DFV services.
2. A service model in each district that includes adequate 24/7 services responses, early intervention and prevention programs and a range of flexible options for clients so that services can genuinely be client-centred in case management approaches (e.g. each district would have a range of safe accommodation (such as specialist women's refuges) and support options for women and children escaping DFV, as well as Staying Home Leaving Violence programs, specialist legal support and strong trauma informed case management services). The service model would include specialised support such as specialist DFV child workers, specialist disability workers and Aboriginal family violence and culturally and linguistically diverse responses. Allocation of services, models and programs should be designed according to needs determined by local specialists, communities and agencies and based on evidence of best practice responses.
3. An integrated and coordinated service system whereby justice, education, family and community services and health systems communicate clearly and work collaboratively to respond to DFV. Common policies, safety and risk assessments and procedures around domestic and family violence should to be adopted nationally in order to address this issue.
4. A qualified, specialised, well-resourced, valued workforce. The DFV service system needs to include accredited quality service standards and highly skilled, well trained DFV workers. All services need to receive ongoing training on domestic and family violence, the impacts of trauma and to work from an intersectional, gendered analysis model of practice.
5. A range of safe and affordable housing options. Domestic and family violence cannot be adequately addressed without appropriate housing – more crisis, transitional and long term affordable housing is required for survivors of violence, families and perpetrators.

NSW SHS services call on the NSW and Federal Governments to include these priorities in the development of any national or state domestic and family violence policy - including in the development of the DFV Blueprint.

We will be reconvening in early 2016 to discuss the progress of this work and how we can ensure our voice is heard in domestic and family violence policy and program development going forward.