Joint Case Review Program Evaluation Report

A report for Families ACT and the Child, Youth and Family Support Program (CYFSP) Workforce Development Sub-Committee

The Youth Coalition of the ACT acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as the traditional owners and continuing custodians of the lands of the ACT and we pay our respects to the Elders, families and ancestors.

We acknowledge that the effect of forced removal of Indigenous children from their families as well as past racist policies and actions continues today.

We acknowledge that the Indigenous people hold distinctive rights as the original people of modern day Australia including the right to a distinct status and culture, self-determination and land. The Youth Coalition of the ACT celebrates Indigenous cultures and the invaluable contribution they make to our community.

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Executive Summary

In January 2020, the Child, Youth and Family Support Program (CYFSP) Workforce Development Sub-Committee provided funding to Families ACT to conduct an evaluation of the Joint Case Review (JCR) Program. Families ACT commissioned the Youth Coalition to undertake this work.

Background

The JCR Program is conducted by Families ACT, targeted at practitioners working in services funded by the CYFSP. The Program aims to 'create a culture of inquiry, continuous learning and collaboration that will improve practice for better outcomes for clients and communities'. The objective of this approach is to create a more consistent case management practice with practitioners across CYFSP programs and to assist with implementation of the Casework Reflective Tool, guiding the work of case managers across the service system. The model seeks to extend the learning from the actions and decisions of individuals, to analysis and learning across organisations and the wider social system.

Formerly known as 'Communities of Practice', the JCR Program commenced in 2017, evolving from work conducted under the former ACT Strengthening Families Project. JCRs are structured learning activities in which facilitators assist small teams of child, youth and family practitioners to review de-identified scenarios using open-ended questions, for the purpose of identifying possible insights and solutions. Facilitators are CYFSP team leaders and practitioners who have been trained in the JCR process.

Evaluation Framework and Methodology

An evaluation framework was developed to inform the evaluation, and included both process and preliminary outcome evaluation components (see Attachment 1). The framework identified the key evaluation questions and sub-questions, evaluation indicators, and the methods of data collection. A program logic was also developed for the JCR Program, to inform the evaluation framework and the evaluation plan (see Attachment 2).

The evaluation included a process evaluation and preliminary outcomes evaluation to identify:

- the extent to which the Program has been implemented as intended,
- the extent to which the Program has engaged the intended audience,
- improvements that could be made to the design and implementation of the Program, and
- the extent to which the Program has delivered the intended outcomes.

It is difficult to measure outcomes with any degree of rigour for a program of this nature, with outcomes such as reflective practice, collaboration and information sharing. As such, the JCR

Program evaluation included a preliminary outcome evaluation focused primarily on respondents' self-reported perceptions of how well the JCR Program has achieved the intended short-term outcomes.

The JCR Program Evaluation used a mixed methods approach, collecting qualitative data and limited quantitative data to evaluate the Program's processes and preliminary outcomes. A collaborative approach was used to develop, implement and communicate the findings of the evaluation. Methods of data collection included a desktop review of Program documentation, two stakeholder surveys, stakeholder interviews, and existing JCR evaluation data.

Thirty-five people participated in an open survey of CYFSP-funded services, and five people participated in a survey for facilitators. Seven people participated in interviews. Participation from across the northside and southside regions, and from youth engagement and family case management services was well-balanced.

Quantitative data from the online surveys was analysed using SurveyMonkey. Data included demographic information about respondents, and descriptive statistics to summarise information about respondents' perceptions related to preliminary outcomes. Qualitative data was analysed using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis program to identify recurring themes. Throughout the full report, quotes from respondents are used to illustrate these themes.

Evaluation Findings

The evaluation found that the JCR Program is a valuable professional development opportunity for practitioners supporting children, young people and families, with potential for improvement. Improved procedures related to administration, communication and oversight, will build on the current strengths of the Program and improve audience engagement.

Process Evaluation Findings

The process evaluation assessed the extent to which the Program was implemented as intended and identified 'lessons learnt' to inform the development or refinement of the Program.

1. To what extent was the Program implemented as intended?

The intention of the JCR Program has changed over time, as the Program has adapted in response to the professional development needs of CYFSP practitioners. A program logic was created at the beginning of the evaluation process to clarify the intention of the Program. This was used as the baseline for the evaluation.

Evaluation respondents identified that JCR Program activities and processes have broadly been implemented as described in the program logic. Key findings related to difficulties engaging the intended audience, and gaps in communication and administration processes. The evaluation found that the intended purpose of the Program has not been clearly communicated, which has

resulted in the intended audience having a range of different expectations, which has affected their engagement. This is discussed further in the second question below.

Key deviations from the intended activities described in the program logic included:

- Cases and scenarios discussed in JCR sessions often combine details from more than one real case, potentially with hypothetical aspects, rather than focusing on a single current case. This is an important distinction, as it relates to participants' differing perceptions of the purpose of the JCR Program.
- A lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities for the provision of administrative and logistical support to the Program.

In relation to the future intent for the Program, there is an interest in looking at ways to make the Program more sustainable, and to consider further expanding the intended audience beyond CYFSP services, in order to build cross-sector collaboration and improve the practice capacity of practitioners in other sectors.

2. To what extent did the Program engage the intended audience?

The JCR Program is targeted at practitioners working in programs funded by the CYFSP. Two key groups are involved with the Program: facilitators and participants. Facilitators are team leaders and practitioners working within CYFSP services who have completed the formal training to facilitate JCR sessions. Currently, JCR sessions are open to staff working in CYFSP programs, which may include both front-line practitioners as well as team leaders and managers. Findings indicated that:

- there is a higher level of engagement from a small group of facilitators who are more involved in planning and conducting JCRs;
- how satisfied and engaged participants are with the JCR Program depends on how well they understand the intended purpose of the Program, as well as their personal experiences with JCR sessions.

Barriers to participation included:

- competing work responsibilities,
- previous experiences attending JCRs,
- external logistical barriers, and
- internal organisational barriers.

Enablers to participation included when management or organisations valued and prioritised professional development for their staff.

A combination of these factors and barriers have led to some CYFSP organisations being less engaged in the JCR Program. Findings also indicated gaps in communication processes for disseminating information and invitations to attend JCRs, as well as a perceived overlap with internal processes, which may prevent some services from participating.

3. What improvements could be made to the design and implementation of the Program?

The JCR Program has informally utilised an action learning approach since its commencement. Continuing to use this approach, supported by formal administrative procedures and oversight mechanisms, improved facilitator supports, and a continuous improvement approach to the delivery of JCR sessions could continue to strengthen the JCR Program and support it to become more sustainable.

Improved administration, communication and oversight procedures

Improved procedures for the JCR program will provide clarity to the Program Coordinator and facilitators regarding their roles and responsibilities; and enable these responsibilities to be better shared across the facilitator group. Procedures will also: address existing gaps in communication and promotion, improve consistency in planning and implementation of JCRs, and assist the target audience to better understand the intended purpose of the Program and improve participant engagement.

Improved facilitator supports

There may be value in considering resourcing and appointing a 'lead' facilitator to assist with coordination tasks. Other supports for facilitators include addressing their ongoing training and professional development needs, and formalising opportunities for all facilitators to share their ideas and contribute to the future strategic direction of the JCR Program.

Delivering a positive learning experience

JCR sessions could be strengthened by focusing on delivering a positive learning experience for participants. This includes encouraging a supportive peer environment and refining the format and delivery of the JCR sessions to promote learning. Ongoing action learning and evaluation methods in collaboration with participants will help the Program Coordinator and facilitators to more easily identify opportunities for continuous improvement.

Outcome Evaluation Findings

An outcome evaluation assesses how effectively a program has achieved its intended outcomes. The JCR Program evaluation included a preliminary outcome evaluation focused primarily on respondents' self-reported perceptions of how well the JCR Program had achieved the intended short-term outcomes. As such, findings should be interpreted with caution.

1. To what extent has the Program delivered the intended outcomes?

- Nearly all respondents agreed that the JCR Program has improved **collaboration** between practitioners and services, and improved a **culture of sharing information and expertise**. However, respondents often referred to 'collaboration' interchangeably with 'networking', and did not discuss how practitioners or services work together to support clients or deliver activities.

- The majority of respondents agreed that the JCR Program has improved their **self-awareness and confidence** as practitioners, and enhanced their **value of the professional work** of CYFSP practitioners. They described feeling more confident in their practice and in networking with other practitioners.

- Approximately half of respondents agreed that the JCR Program has improved their **reflective practice focused on problem-solving**.

- Approximately half of respondents also agreed that the JCR Program has helped them to develop **new skills and knowledge**, increased the use of **strengths-based language**, and established **clearer communication** between practitioners and services.

- Only one-third of CYFSP survey respondents agreed that the JCR Program had improved their understanding of **child, youth and family safety issues**.

Impact on the CYFSP and broader sector

- Feedback from respondents indicated that the implementation of the JCR Program alongside or in conjunction with other CYFSP initiatives (including the Service Improvement Project, Practice Framework and Casework Reflective Tool) have contributed to a broader positive impact.
- Respondents also identified that the CYFSP felt more connected and the JCR Program enabled networking opportunities across the CYFSP.

Impact upon internal supervision processes

- A small number of respondents identified that the JCR Program has informed the approaches and language used within their teams and organisations internally to discuss particular cases, both informally and within formal supervision.
- Some respondents said that they have 'mini JCRs' in their organisations, or that the JCR Program model is used in supervision.
- This occurred most often when facilitators had the authorising environment to implement the principles and approaches of the JCR model within their own organisations.

2. Are there any other positive, negative or unintended consequences?

Unintended consequences included:

- Improved networking opportunities: Many respondents discussed the benefits of having opportunities to meet other workers and learn about their services through the JCR Program.

- Improved practice leadership: Respondents described that the 'train the trainer' model of the JCR Program has enabled facilitators to become 'practice leaders' within the CYFSP.

Outside of the JCR Program, professional development repeatedly emerged as a related theme. Respondents discussed the extent to which professional development is valued, prioritised and supported by managers and within organisations; identifying this as a barrier to participating in professional development opportunities.

Recommendations

Recommendations are provided for the consideration of Families ACT, the JCR Program Coordinator, JCR facilitators and the CYFSP Workforce Development Sub-Committee.

Recommendation #1

Develop comprehensive Program Guidelines for the JCR Program, to detail key roles and responsibilities and describe administrative, communication and oversight procedures for the Program. The Program Guidelines should outline and include:
- Clear roles and responsibilities for the Program Coordinator and facilitators
- Formal training, professional development and support processes for facilitators
- Communication procedures relating to promotion and information dissemination
- Implementation of JCR sessions, including the steps involved in hosting and facilitating a JCR session
- Record-keeping processes, including for collecting and reviewing attendance records
- Evaluation and monitoring processes for both facilitators and participants
- Relevant templates and forms for use by the Program Coordinator and facilitators, such as evaluation/feedback forms, attendance sheets and session plans

Recommendation #2

Develop and implement a communication plan to assist CYFSP services to better understand the purpose of and improve engagement with the JCR Program. This should include:
- Creating promotional materials to clearly articulate the intended purpose of the JCR, what practitioners can expect from participating, and upcoming session dates.
- Promotional materials should be distributed to stakeholders but also made available through a central location, such as the Families ACT website. The JCR Program should be clearly branded as a Families ACT initiative, due to confusion about who runs the Program.
- Developing a centralised email contact list of CYFSP practitioners and services, organised by both region (northside / southside) and service type (case management, youth engagement), to ensure that JCR information and invitations are systematically disseminated to all relevant services.
- Individual approaches to services that have either not been invited or have become disengaged to discuss the purpose and benefits of the Program to their organisations, and to identify and address concerns or barriers.

Recommendation #3

Develop an ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the ongoing delivery of the JCR Program, to enable Families ACT, the Program Coordinator and facilitators to monitor how effectively the Program is implemented into the future; respond to emerging needs of the intended audience; assess the impact of further changes over time; and examine the feasibility of measuring outcomes. A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework should:

- Identify key questions and sub-questions linked to the JCR Program Logic, and link these to indicators and reliable sources of data
- Incorporate a continuous improvement approach that formalises the current action learning model

Recommendation #4

Strengthen formal supports for facilitators by clarifying roles and responsibilities, and ensuring that these are shared across the group. Depending on the scope of the responsibilities, there may be value in resourcing and appointing a 'lead' facilitator to undertake coordination tasks. Formal supports should be articulated in the Program Guidelines and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, and include:

- Ensuring that formal training to facilitators provides practical skills as well as theory, including focusing on the experience of facilitating a JCR
- Considering the ongoing training and professional development needs of facilitators, which may include 'refresher' sessions or build upon existing debriefing sessions
- Providing formal opportunities for facilitators to share ideas and contribute to the future strategic direction of the JCR Program

Recommendation #5

Focus on delivering a positive learning experience for participants, by promoting a supportive peer environment and revisiting the format and delivery of JCR sessions. This should also be articulated in the Program Guidelines and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. Strategies for consideration include:

- Establishing 'group rules' and principles during JCR session introductions to encourage supportive and safe discussions
- Clearly articulating the purpose of the JCR sessions during JCR session introductions to reduce confusion and promote constructive discussions
- Considering the strategic composition of small groups, aiming for a mix of services to promote networking and collaboration, and ensuring that each group includes a facilitator or practitioner who is experienced with JCRs.
- Inviting participants to identify areas they would like to explore in future case studies, which may relate to challenges they have experienced or topics they would like to learn more about.
- Focusing on a different component of the Practice Framework at each JCR session, to avoid repetition and increase deep-learning about the Practice Framework components
- Incorporating multimedia into JCRs to respond to different learning styles of participants
- Providing information or education related to the topics being discussed within the case study

- Developing formal evaluation mechanisms for participants to provide feedback about their experiences and identify areas for improvement.

Recommendation #6

Consider expanding the intended audience beyond CYFSP services, in order to build cross-sector collaboration and knowledge. While this needs to be considered in its approach, as a first step there would be value in inviting community-based services that provide similar types of support to children, young people and families; noting that young people and families do not access CYFSP services in isolation from other services. Such services might include:

- Youth centres in Canberra and the surrounding region that do not receive CYFSP funding
- Youth housing and homelessness providers, including outreach services
- Community-based out-of-home care services
- Community mental health and alcohol and other drug programs
- Community services supporting families affected by domestic and family violence
- Community services supporting specific population groups, such as migrant and refugee families, gender and sexuality diverse young people, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Recommendation #7

Clarify the meaning and intention of including 'collaboration between practitioners and services' as an outcome of the JCR Program, and how this is addressed within JCR sessions to build a shared understanding of what this means and looks like in practice. It would then be beneficial for facilitators to lead discussions with participants about what collaboration looks like in the delivery of programs and client support, and to identify how the JCR Program can support practitioners to implement collaboration outside of JCRs.

Recommendation #8

Enhance a focus in the JCR Program and within sessions on child, youth and family safety. It may be beneficial for facilitators to lead discussions with participants to explore the reasons why this outcome did not resonate with respondents, and to identify how their professional development needs in this area can be better supported.

Recommendation #9

Articulate to CYFSP services how the JCR Program can work alongside and inform both informal and formal supervision and professional development processes within organisations. This may be included in the communication plan and in key Program materials, be explained to participants during JCR sessions, and communicated to CYFSP managers and services in forums outside of the JCR sessions.

Recommendation #10

At a systemic level, the CYFSP needs to identify strategies to ensure that professional development for practitioners is valued, prioritised and enabled by managers and within organisations.

Introduction

In January 2020, the Child, Youth and Family Support Program (CYFSP) Workforce Development Sub-Committee provided funding to Families ACT to conduct an evaluation of the Joint Case Review (JCR) Program. Families ACT commissioned the Youth Coalition to undertake this work between January and April 2020. The end-date was extended to the end of June, due to the impact of COVID-19.

The JCR Program is conducted by Families ACT, targeted at practitioners working in services funded by the CYFSP. The Program aims to 'create a culture of inquiry, continuous learning and collaboration that will improve practice for better outcomes for clients and communities'.

The evaluation included a process evaluation and preliminary outcomes evaluation to identify:

- the extent to which the Program has been implemented as intended;
- the extent to which the Program has engaged the intended audience;
- improvements that could be made to the design and implementation of the Program; and
- the extent to which the Program has delivered the intended outcomes.

This document is the final evaluation report. It describes the approach, methodology and findings, and puts forward recommendations regarding the continued development of the JCR Program.

Background

Formerly known as 'Communities of Practice', the JCR Program commenced in 2017 with CYFSP case management services, evolving from work conducted under the former ACT Strengthening Families Project. It sought to implement reflective practice methodology at a practice and systemic level. Joint Case Reviews were identified as a tested, evidence-based model that could be implemented to support regionally-based communities of practice for the CYFSP.

The JCR Program aims to create a culture of inquiry, continuous learning and collaboration to improve practice for better outcomes for clients and communities. The objective of this approach is to create a more consistent case management practice with practitioners across CYFSP programs and to assist with implementation of the Casework Reflective Tool, guiding the work of case managers across the service system. The model seeks to extend the learning from the actions and decisions of individuals, to analysis and learning across organisations and the wider social system.

JCRs are structured learning activities in which facilitators assist small teams of child, youth and family practitioners to review de-identified scenarios using open-ended questions, for the purpose of identifying possible insights and solutions. Facilitators are CYFSP team leaders and practitioners who have been trained in the JCR process.

Seven JCR sessions are held each year, for the following combinations of service types:

- Two Northside region sessions: Combined youth engagement and family case management
- Two Southside region sessions: Combined youth engagement and family case management
- Youth engagement services only
- Family support services only
- ACT wide: Combined youth engagement and family case management

More information about the activities of the JCR Program is available in Section 1.1.

How to read this report

This report includes two key components: the Evaluation Framework and Methodology; and the Evaluation Findings and Recommendations. The Evaluation Framework and Methodology component describes the evaluation approach, methods and limitations. The Evaluation Findings and Recommendations component is further structured into two parts: the Process Evaluation, and Preliminary Outcome Evaluation.

Process and Outcome evaluation findings have been structured by the Evaluation Framework (see Attachment 1), with detailed answers provided to each of the key questions and sub-questions. These detailed answers have been provided for the benefit of the JCR Program Team. Discussion of the findings is included at the end of the Process Evaluation section (page 17), and the Preliminary Outcome Evaluation (page 44).

A separate Abbreviated Report was also provided, which is suggested for readers who would like to access a brief overview of the findings, discussion and recommendations.

Evaluation Framework and Methodology

An evaluation framework was developed to inform the evaluation, and included both process and preliminary outcome evaluation components (see Attachment 1). The framework identified the key evaluation questions and sub-questions; evaluation indicators and the methods of data collection.

A program logic was also developed for the JCR Program, to inform the evaluation framework and the evaluation plan (see Attachment 2). The program logic demonstrates how the JCR Program is expected to work. It articulates the Program activities and how these are intended to link to short, medium and long-term outcomes. It includes the following components:

- *Program aim and objectives:* The aim of the Program and its approach
- *Inputs:* Resources required to implement the Program activities
- *Activities*: Program activities to be conducted
- *Outputs*: The Program products that are delivered

- *Outcomes*: The short, medium and long-term changes expected once activities are completed

An initial draft of the JCR program logic was developed based on a review of JCR Program documentation; and then refined in collaboration with Families ACT. The updated program logic provided the baseline from which the evaluation was conducted.

Process Evaluation

A process evaluation assesses the extent to which a program has been implemented as intended, and identifies 'lessons learnt' to inform the development or refinement of a Program. The process evaluation questions and sub-questions for the JCR Program evaluation included:

1. To what extent was the Program implemented as intended?
    a. What was intended to be achieved?
    b. What were the intended activities?
    c. Is the Program based on evidence?
    d. What activities and processes have been implemented as part of the Program?
    e. What changes have been made to the delivery and outcomes of the Program?
    f. Why were the changes made?
    g. What is the intended future of the Program?

2. To what extent did the Program engage the intended audience?
    a. Who is the intended audience(s)?
    b. How were Program facilitators identified and recruited?
    c. To what extent did initial and ongoing training and professional development opportunities provided to facilitators support them to implement their role?

d. What barriers and enablers did facilitators experience to participating?
e. To what extent did the intended audience(s) know and understand the purpose of the Program?
f. What were the barriers and enablers experienced by the intended audience(s) to participate in the Program?
g. Why have some CYFSP practitioners and services not participated in the Program?
h. How satisfied are participants with their experience of the Program?

3. What improvements could be made to the design and implementation of the Program?
    a. How could the administrative/logistics component of the Program be strengthened? What are the barriers and enablers to doing this?
    b. How could processes to support facilitators be strengthened? What are the barriers and enablers to doing this?
    c. How could JCR sessions be strengthened? What are the barriers and enablers to doing this?
    d. How could the Program become more sustainable?

Preliminary Outcome Evaluation

An outcome evaluation assesses how effectively a program has achieved its intended outcomes. It is difficult to measure outcomes with any degree of rigour for a program of this nature, with outcomes such as reflective practice, collaboration and information sharing. As such, the JCR Program evaluation included a preliminary outcome evaluation focused primarily on the intended short-term outcomes. As evaluation measures had not been established at the commencement of the Program, it was only feasible to collect data based on respondents' self-reported perceptions of how the JCR Program has impacted upon their practice.

The outcome evaluation questions and sub-questions for the JCR evaluation included:

1. To what extent has the Program delivered the intended outcomes?
    a. What are the intended outcomes?
    b. Have the intended outcomes of the Program changed?
    c. Have JCRs made a positive difference to participants and their practice?
    d. To what extent has the Program:
        i. improved practitioners' reflective practice focused on:
            1. collaboration between practitioners and services?
            2. critical analysis and the opportunity to share creative solutions to complex problems?
            3. development of new skills and knowledge?
            4. ensuring practice reflects the principles and values of the Casework Reflective Tool?
        ii. increased the use of strengths-based language to review and reflect on practice?
        iii. improved practitioner confidence?

iv. enhanced the value and purpose of the professional work of practitioners across the child, youth and family sector?

v. led to an improved culture of sharing information and expertise?

vi. increased practitioner self-awareness?

vii. improved practitioners' judgement of child and youth safety issues?

viii. improved practitioners' judgement of family safety issues?

ix. established and developed clearer lines of communication between stakeholders?

x. improved practitioners' capacity to conduct and be involved in JCRs?

e. What is the impact of the Program on the CYFSP and broader sector?

f. Has the Program impacted upon or informed other forms of internal supervision and professional development for practitioners?

2. Are there any other positive, negative or unintended consequences?

a. Has involvement in the JCR Program had unexpected/unintended positive or negative outcomes?

b. What has led to the unintended positive or negative outcomes?

Evaluation Methodology

The JCR Program Evaluation used a mixed methods approach, collecting qualitative data and limited quantitative data to evaluate the Program's processes and preliminary outcomes. A collaborative approach was used to develop, implement and communicate the findings of the evaluation, in order to ensure that the evaluation met the needs of the commissioning agency (Families ACT). This included inviting Families ACT to participate on an Evaluation Reference Group to inform the development of the Evaluation Plan and to pilot evaluation methods; and informing the JCR Program Team about relevant early findings.

Evaluation Reference Group

An Evaluation Reference Group was established to inform and advise the project evaluation team, and included representation from the Youth Coalition and Families ACT. The Evaluation Reference Group met periodically throughout the Evaluation, to:

- inform the development of the Evaluation Plan and Framework;
- inform the development of the Program Logic;
- provide feedback on the survey and interview schedule; and,

- discuss the analysis and presentation of the evaluation findings.

Methods of Data Collection

Both qualitative and limited quantitative data sources were used to answer the process and outcome evaluation questions. These included:

1. **Desktop review:** Existing JCR Program documentation was reviewed to examine the extent to which processes and outcomes have been documented for the Program, and to identify whether these processes and outcomes had changed during the implementation of the Program. Documents were provided by the Program Coordinator, and included session plans and case study scenarios, limited attendance records, training materials, and background documents describing the development and purpose of the model.

2. **Stakeholder surveys:** Two online surveys were conducted through SurveyMonkey to obtain feedback from CYFSP practitioners and services. The surveys aimed to collect information from respondents about their perceptions of the JCR Program, barriers and enablers to participation and facilitation, the extent to which they thought the Program had achieved its intended outcomes, and how the Program could be improved. Responses were de-identified, and included a range of open and closed questions. Most questions were optional.

    a. Survey of CYFSP practitioners and services: This survey was targeted at staff members of CYFSP-funded services, and included those who had both participated and not participated in the JCR Program. Thirty-five people responded to the survey.

    b. Survey of JCR Program Facilitators: This survey was targeted at the CYFSP practitioners and team leaders who had previously completed the JCR Program Facilitator training. Five people responded to the survey.

3. **Stakeholder interviews:** Seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders from CYFSP-funded programs and services to build on the findings of the surveys, and to discuss the evaluation questions in more detail. Separate interview schedules were developed for JCR participants, facilitators, and the Families ACT JCR Program team. With consent from participants, the interviews were audio recorded. Notes were also taken to record initial impressions of each interview.

4. **Existing JCR evaluation data:** The JCR Program Coordinator provided evaluation forms completed by participants who attended a 2019 JCR session, and contributed to the findings of this evaluation.

Evaluation recruitment

An invitation to participate in the survey was distributed to over 120 staff of CYFSP-funded services, through existing mailing lists (including CYFSP 'Practice Leaders' and 'Directors' lists), and using previous JCR attendance lists. This dissemination method aimed to reach a range of staff working at practitioner, management and executive levels; who had either participated in

the JCR Program or who were less familiar with it. The survey was also promoted directly to participants at the first JCR session of 2020.

The facilitator survey was promoted directly to the list of facilitators provided by the JCR Program Coordinator, with an additional reminder email.

Recruitment for interviews occurred after the surveys had commenced; and aimed to include a cross-section of individuals from across the stakeholder groups of facilitators, participants and the Families ACT JCR Program team; by service type (youth engagement or case management) and region (northside / southside). A service was also included that had limited involvement with the JCR Program. The evaluation team sought to include individuals with a range of experiences and views of the Program.

Evaluation Sample

Thirty-five staff from CYFSP-funded services participated in the open survey of CYFSP-funded services. Five people participated in the survey of facilitators, and seven people participated in interviews. Participation from across the northside and southside regions, and from youth engagement and family case management services was well-balanced. Nearly 75% of respondents had most recently attended a JCR session in 2019 or 2020 (noting that at the time the data collection had concluded, only one JCR session had been held in 2020).

Data Analysis

Qualitative data from the surveys, and the transcribed interviews, were imported into Nvivo, a qualitative data analysis tool. This data was coded to identify recurring themes. Throughout the report, quotes from respondents are used to illustrate these themes. Quantitative data from the online surveys was analysed through SurveyMonkey. This included demographic information about respondents, and descriptive statistics to summarise information about respondents' perceptions related to preliminary outcomes.

Ethics

Evaluation findings have been de-identified in order to protect the identities of respondents, noting the limits of confidentiality within a small jurisdiction. As such, quotes from individuals included in this report are attributed to the source of data (i.e. CYFSP Survey Respondent, Facilitator Survey Respondent, Interview Participant), rather than to their professional position.

Evaluation Limitations

Qualitative research is an effective way to examine and better understand the experiences and perceptions of research participants. However, caution should be exercised in making firm conclusions from qualitative data, particularly in relation to the preliminary outcome evaluation, in determining whether the JCR Program is achieving its intended outcomes. While this

evaluation sought to ensure that the participant sample included representation from across service types and service regions, it should not be assumed that findings apply to the broader population of practitioners and services eligible to participate in the JCR Program.

It is also possible that the community-wide impact of the COVID-19 pandemic affected the rate of participation in the surveys; as practitioners and services were managing significant shifts in service delivery during this time.

Evaluation Findings and Recommendations

This component of the report is structured by two parts: the Process Evaluation, and the Preliminary Outcome Evaluation. Findings have been structured by the Evaluation Framework (see Attachment 1), with detailed answers provided to each of the key questions and sub-questions. Discussion of the findings, and recommendations, are included at the end of the Process Evaluation section (page 40), and the Preliminary Outcome Evaluation (page 55), as well as in the Executive Summary and Abbreviated Report.

The evaluation found that the JCR Program is a valuable professional development opportunity for practitioners supporting children, young people and families, with potential for improvement. Improved administration, communication and oversight procedures, will build on the current strengths of the Program and improve audience engagement.

1. Process Evaluation

A process evaluation assesses the extent to which a program has been implemented as intended, and identifies 'lessons learnt' to inform the development or refinement of a Program. Key evaluation questions for the process evaluation included:

1. To what extent was the Program implemented as intended?
2. To what extent did the Program engage the intended audience?
3. What improvements could be made to the design and implementation of the Program?

1.1 To what extent was the Program implemented as intended?

The intention of the JCR Program has changed over time, as the Program has adapted in response to the professional development needs of CYFSP practitioners. A program logic was created at the beginning of the evaluation process to clarify the intention of the Program. This was used as the baseline for the evaluation.

Evaluation respondents identified that JCR Program activities and processes have broadly been implemented as described in the program logic. Key findings related to difficulties engaging the intended audience, and gaps in communication and administration processes. The evaluation found that the intended purpose of the Program has not been clearly communicated, which has resulted in the intended audience having a range of different expectations. This is discussed further in Section 1.2.

Key deviations from the intended activities described in the program logic included that cases and scenarios used in JCR sessions often combine details from more than one real case, potentially with hypothetical aspects, rather than focusing on a single current case. This is an important distinction, as it relates to participants' differing perceptions of the purpose of the JCR Program. Additionally, there appeared to be a lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities for the provision of administrative and logistical support to the Program.

In relation to the future intent for the Program, there is an interest in looking at ways to make the Program more sustainable, and to consider further expanding the intended audience beyond CYFSP services, in order to build cross-sector collaboration and improve the practice capacity of practitioners in other sectors.

Further detail is provided in the responses to the sub-questions below.

1.1.1 What was intended to be achieved?

The aim, objective and intended outcomes of the JCR Program are outlined in the Program Logic (see Attachment 2).

The JCR Program aim is to: 'create a culture of inquiry, continuous learning and collaboration that will improve practice for better outcomes for clients and communities.'

The JCR Program objective is: 'This approach will create a more consistent case management practice with practitioners across CYFSP programs and assist with implementation of the Casework Reflective Tool, to guide the work of case managers across the service system. The model extends the learning from the actions and decisions of individuals to analysis and learning across organisations and the wider social system.'

1.1.2 What were the intended activities?

The intended activities are outlined in the Program Logic (see Attachment 2), and include:

- JCR sessions: Structured learning activities conducted jointly and involving practitioners from different services. Practitioners are usually eligible to attend up to four of seven sessions annually, which vary by geographic region and service type:
  - Two Northside region sessions: Combined youth engagement and family case management
  - Two Southside region sessions: Combined youth engagement and family case management
  - Youth engagement services only
  - Family support services only
  - ACT wide: Combined youth engagement and family case management

- JCRs are based on de-identified real cases or scenarios that provide supporting information, data and relevant documentation analysed by small teams through open-ended questions, assisted by a facilitator, put forward for possible insights and solutions.

- JCR facilitators assist small teams during sessions through knowledge of the case review process and its rationale, maintaining confidentiality, building trust, encouraging open and honest discussion and promoting critical thinking. Facilitators choose and circulate case studies.

- Training and support is provided to facilitators to plan, conduct and debrief after each JCR session.

- The JCR Program Coordinator provides administrative and logistics support to organise JCR sessions and support for facilitators, including:
  - Planning the annual JCR calendar
  - Booking venues
  - Promoting sessions
  - Recording participant information
  - Reporting to Families ACT
  - Meeting with facilitators prior to and after sessions
  - Coordinating set-up with facilitators

- Stakeholder engagement and communication with services and practitioners to provide information about the JCR program.

1.1.3 Is the Program based on evidence?

The Program documentation identified that the JCR Program is based on a 'Case Review Model':

"... developed from national and international research evidence on case reviews and in particular from research conducted by the Social Care Institute of Excellence in the UK (SCIE)... The Model has been adapted from the work of SCIE and developed to be aligned to the objectives of continuous learning in the Strengthening Families Communities of Practice."
[Joint Case Review Model Train the Trainer Guide, p 1]

The Train the Trainer Guide includes a bibliography citing a range of academic sources. These sources related to concepts including serious case reviews, child protection, child deaths and serious injury through abuse and neglect, systems approaches, safeguarding children, critical reflection and reflective practice, systems thinking, social work, and collaboration.

1.1.4 What activities and processes have been implemented as part of the Program?

Evaluation respondents identified that JCR Program activities and processes have broadly been implemented as described in the program logic. Detailed documentation regarding the implementation of the JCR Program since its commencement in 2017, such as comprehensive attendance records, was limited. Deviations to the intended activities and processes are outlined in Section 1.1.5.

1.1.5 What changes have been made to the delivery and outcomes of the Program?

Key deviations from the intended activities described in the program logic included that cases and scenarios used in JCR sessions often combine details from more than one real case, potentially with hypothetical aspects, rather than focusing on a single current case. This is an important distinction, as it relates to participants' differing perceptions of the purpose of the JCR Program (see Section 1.2.3). Additionally, there appeared to be a lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities for the provision of administrative and logistical support to the Program. This is discussed further in Section 1.2.2.

While the outcomes of the JCR Program have remained consistent, the delivery of the Program has evolved since its commencement in 2017. Originally developed from work conducted under the former ACT Strengthening Families Project, regionally-based 'Communities of Practice' were established in 2017 with CYFSP case management teams, using a 'case review model' of professional learning. Through case reviews, teams looked at the themes present in the work of practitioners (rather than the detail of cases presented), and examined the journey of families through the phases of the case management approach. It also sought to look at ways in which the CYFSP Practice Framework and Strengthening Families practice principles informed case management practice.

These 'Communities of Practice' are now referred to and understood as the Joint Case Review Program. A significant change to the Program was the expansion of the target audience to include CYFSP youth engagement teams. This led to the development of the following JCR session compositions:

- Two Northside region sessions: Combined youth engagement and family case management
- Two Southside region sessions: Combined youth engagement and family case management
- Youth engagement services only
- Family support services only
- ACT wide: Combined youth engagement and family case management

As facilitators and participants have become more familiar with the JCR model, changes have been made over time to the delivery of JCR sessions, including the transition from large group discussions led by one or two facilitators; to smaller table-based discussion groups.

Training of facilitators has also changed in scope and delivery. The first round of training in 2017 focused on CYFSP team leaders and coordinators, while the second round in 2018 invited senior practitioners from services. It is understood that the third round of training planned for July 2020 will include practitioners with prior experience of the JCR Program, and focus more on the facilitation experience, aiming for a better balance between theory and practical skills. This is discussed more in Section 1.2.2.

1.1.6 Why were the changes made?

The JCR Program has adapted in response to the professional development needs of CYFSP practitioners, including an interest expressed by youth engagement practitioners to become involved in the Program.

The delivery of JCRs has evolved as facilitators and participants have become more familiar with the case review model. For example, some facilitators have trialled different modes of delivery (e.g. large group discussions) to learn which session models were more effective. As such, the JCR Program has informally utilised an 'action learning' model, which has sought to be flexible and responsive to learnings as they emerged.

> *"JCR's are continuing to evolve. We need to remain flexible and work through challenges as they arise." [CYFSP survey respondent]*

1.1.7 What is the intended future of the Program?

While there is not a clearly defined intended future for the Program, there was an interest in looking at ways to make the Program more sustainable (discussed further at Section 1.3.4), and to consider further expanding the intended audience to include services outside of the CYFSP.

Respondents from across the Program team, facilitators and participants discussed the value, opportunities and risks associated with inviting practitioners from other services and sectors to participate in the JCR Program. The range of other potential services suggested by respondents included:

- Community-based youth services funded outside the CYFSP, including homelessness services
- Education: school-based youth workers, Network Student Engagement Teams
- ACT Child and Family Centres
- Child Youth Protection Services and community-based out-of-home care services
- Health, mental health and alcohol and other drug services

On the one hand, respondents saw the value in inviting other services to participate, in order to build cross-sector collaboration and improve the practice capacity of practitioners in other sectors. On the other hand, they were concerned about the potential risk of disrupting the trust and connection that had developed between existing participants if new services were introduced; as well as the risk of having too many people in the room. It was clear that any discussion to expand the intended audience would need to be carefully considered and well thought out in its approach.

> *"There is a role for the JCRs to step out to the broader sector – thinking about it in relation to the casework tool... finding a common language among diversely qualified people." [Interview participant]*

"The JCRs are pretty comfy with CYFSP at the moment. Any changes would need to be considered and gradual." [Interview participant]

1.2 To what extent did the Program engage the intended audience?

The JCR Program is targeted at practitioners working in programs funded by the CYFSP. Two key groups are involved with the Program: facilitators and participants. Facilitators are team leaders and practitioners working within CYFSP services who have completed the formal training to facilitate JCR sessions. Currently, JCR sessions are open to staff working in CYFSP programs, which may include both front-line practitioners as well as team leaders and managers.

There is a higher level of engagement from a small group of facilitators who are more involved in planning and conducting JCRs. This has been exacerbated by limited formal administrative and communication processes, and a lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities between the Program Coordinator and facilitators. Feedback on the formal facilitator training was that it provided a comprehensive overview of the theory and principles of JCRs but needed to strike a better balance between theory and practical skills. Supporting facilitators to strengthen practical skills in delivering JCRs, discussing their ongoing training and professional development needs, and providing structured opportunities to give feedback and contribute to Program development may increase their engagement with the Program.

How satisfied and engaged participants were with the JCR Program appeared to depend on how well they understood the intended purpose of the Program, and their personal experiences with JCR sessions.

There is a divergence among the intended audience regarding their perceptions of the primary purpose of the JCR Program. This divergence was founded on whether participants viewed the JCR Program primarily as a professional development opportunity to improve their capacity for reflective practice and to engage in learning; or, as an opportunity to work together to 'workshop' and problem-solve current complex cases. Those who considered the purpose to be the latter were more likely to express frustration that the JCR Program did not meet their expectations. Respondents who viewed JCR sessions as an opportunity to engage in reflective practice appeared to find more value in the JCR Program.

Respondents' personal experiences during JCR sessions related particularly to group dynamics, with some respondents reporting feeling judged by other practitioners; and to the format delivery of JCR sessions.

In addition to their personal experiences with the JCR Program, respondents identified barriers and enablers that affected their participation. Barriers most frequently related to 'competing work responsibilities', as well as external logistical barriers, such as travel, and internal organisational barriers. Internal barriers primarily related to professional development being considered as secondary to client work by both practitioners and managers. Conversely, the

primary enabler that supported respondents to participate in the JCR Program was when they felt their manager or organisation valued and prioritised professional development.

It is possible that a combination of these factors and barriers have led to some CYFSP organisations being less engaged in the JCR Program. While the evaluation did not have the opportunity to speak to every service that was less engaged in the Program, findings indicated gaps in communication processes for disseminating information and invitations to attend JCRs, as well as a perceived overlap with internal processes, which may prevent some services from participating. The Program is currently reliant on facilitators forwarding invitations through their own networks, and invitations are not systematically promoted to all eligible CYFSP services and practitioners.

One respondent identified that they had stopped attending JCRs because they felt it duplicated the internal group supervision processes they had established within their organisation, in which teams of staff participate in group case reviews about current cases. This perceived overlap between the JCR Program and this organisation's internal group supervision process may speak to the divergence in perception among respondents about the purpose of JCRs as a professional development opportunity, rather than a current case review mechanism. Other respondents had reported that the JCR Program has helped to inform and strengthen their internal supervision processes and practices, presenting an opportunity for the JCR Program to better articulate how it could sit alongside and inform internal supervision processes.

Further detail is provided in the responses to the sub-questions below.

1.2.1 Who is the intended audience(s)?

As identified in the JCR Program Logic, the JCR Program is targeted at practitioners working in programs funded by the CYFSP. Two key groups are involved with the Program: facilitators and participants. Facilitators are team leaders and practitioners working within CYFSP services who have completed the formal training to facilitate JCR sessions. Facilitators plan and conduct JCR sessions. Currently, the JCR sessions are open to staff working in CYFSP programs, which may include both front-line practitioners as well as team leaders and managers.

Evaluation respondents identified that the JCR Program would be beneficial for all case managers, workers who are new to the sector or who do not have related tertiary qualifications, and students. There were varying views about whether manager-level staff of CYFSP services should be involved - while some thought it could improve organisational buy-in, others felt that it would negatively impact on practitioners' willingness to share during the session.

Many respondents also discussed the potential for the JCR Program to expand its audience beyond CYFSP services. This is further discussed in Section 1.1.7.

1.2.2 How were Program facilitators recruited and supported through training and professional development?

Recruitment and formal training

There have previously been two rounds of formal facilitator training. The first training in 2017 included CYFSP team leaders and coordinators. The second round of training in 2018 included senior practitioners. A third round of training is planned for July 2020, and will include practitioners who have previously participated in JCR sessions.

For those who actively expressed an interest to the Program Coordinator in becoming a facilitator, their motivations included: expanding JCRs from case management services to youth engagement teams, supporting services to lift the standards of case work, supporting peer learning and development, and contributing to the further development of the JCR Program.

"I am passionate about having a shared strength-based model of service delivery across the CYFSP. I believe I have knowledge and experience that would be beneficial to share through the JCR model. I also wanted to ensure my team at the time were engaged and felt by being a facilitator I could make this happen." [Facilitator survey respondent]

Feedback on both the surveys and interviews about the formal training was generally consistent It found that while the training provided a comprehensive overview of the theory and principles of JCRs, it needed to strike a better balance between theory and practical skills, potentially including a mock-JCR session. Some facilitators expressed an interest in having a follow-up session soon after the formal training to ask additional questions, and also said it would be beneficial to facilitate their first JCR soon after completing the training.

"It really wasn't useful. It wasn't until I participated in one, and facilitated one myself that I really understood what was going on. The training just wasn't practical, although it did reinforce the importance of sticking to the principles." [Facilitator survey respondent]

"I felt as though I walked away with so much information and would have loved to be able to have longer in the training to process it all and ask questions. The content was great though!" [Facilitator survey respondent]

It is understood that the third round of training planned for July 2020 is intended to be more practical and include a mini JCR session. While the training will be delivered by experienced facilitators, one facilitator expressed disappointment that the broader group of facilitators had not been invited to contribute to the re-development of the training.

Some respondents discussed the need for ongoing training and professional development for facilitators, identifying a need to strengthen facilitators' understanding of the principles of JCRs. This could potentially be achieved through 'refresher' training, or by inviting current facilitators to participate in the practical components of the upcoming training in July.

> *"I have found some facilitators still focus on solutions or jump into what they think is best for the client. This is tricky as they are the facilitator and should know that's not what JCRs are about." [CYFSP survey respondent]*

Some facilitators suggested that it would be useful for more people to undertake the training to help them better understand the purpose of the JCR Program, highlighting a fundamental issue with how well the intended audience understands the Program (see Section 1.2.3 for more discussion about this).

Ongoing support and enablers for facilitators

Ongoing formal support for facilitators is provided predominantly through a formal debriefing and reflection session between facilitators after each JCR session, assisted by the Program Coordinator.

Most facilitators who had participated in the debriefing sessions provided positive feedback about these debriefing opportunities, describing them as an opportunity to identify strengths as well as areas for improvement, to receive and provide constructive feedback, and to learn how to think critically. One respondent felt that their feedback about the delivery of the sessions had not been taken into account.

> *"The debriefing sessions with other facilitators, along with [Facilitator] and [Program Coordinator] are great. I take a lot from the feedback I receive on my facilitation to ensure I am supporting practitioners to gain the most from JCR."*
> *[Facilitator survey respondent]*

> *"Having [Program Coordinator] helps with consistency, this should continue."*
> *[Facilitator survey respondent]*

Facilitators identified that feeling supported by other facilitators, as well as their own organisation, enabled them to conduct their role as a facilitator. This feeling of support from other facilitators varied, due to the varying levels of involvement from facilitators in the planning and implementation of JCR sessions.

> *"[Facilitator] is very good at corralling the troops... Otherwise there isn't really much support." [Facilitator survey respondent]*

Benefits for facilitators

Facilitators described a range of factors that helped them to enjoy facilitating. This included being part of bringing people together and finding a common language, fostering curiosity, and enjoying the discussion and learning from others.

> *"The actual facilitation of the session, whilst stressful, is generally satisfying."*
> *[Facilitator survey respondent]*

> *"I like having the opportunity to ask good questions - to help people to analyse their own motivations, feelings and biases... Discussions to leave people with a better understanding of the work." [Interview participant]*

Challenges for facilitators

Many of the challenges identified by facilitators echoed the barriers identified by participants, such as competing work responsibilities (discussed further in Section 1.2.4). They also highlighted challenges encouraging practitioners to attend and participate.

The facilitator-led nature of the Program, in which facilitators are involved in making decisions about and implementing planning and logistics for JCR sessions, appears to be both a strength and weakness of the Program. While it has led to greater buy-in from some organisations, limited formal administrative and communication procedures means it often falls on a few key facilitators to implement JCRs, without additional resourcing. This pressure was exacerbated by a high attrition rate of facilitators. Not all facilitators felt like they were given equal opportunity to have their views taken seriously when making suggestions about how the JCR sessions could be improved. There is also a lack of clarity between the roles and responsibilities of the Program Coordinator as distinct from the facilitators in carrying out administrative and logistical tasks.

> *"Frustrating that [Facilitator] and [Program Coordinator] have to put a lot of time and effort in - there needs to be more collective ownership."*
> *[Interview participant]*

> *"[Program Coordinator], and other facilitators [are sources of support], although support from other facilitators varies. It can actually be quite lonely at times, as not all other facilitators or services have the same perspective on the value of JCR's." [Facilitator survey respondent]*

1.2.3 To what extent did the intended audience(s) know and understand the purpose of the Program?

The purpose of the JCR Program is described in the Program Logic (see Attachment 2), and Section 1.1.

Findings from both the surveys and interviews indicated a divergence in views about the purpose of the JCR Program, particularly among participants and potential participants (as opposed to facilitators). The extent to which practitioners understood the purpose of the JCRs appeared to influence how willing they were to attend and participate.

This divergence was founded on whether participants primarily viewed the JCR Program as a professional development opportunity to improve their capacity for reflective practice and to engage in learning; or, as an opportunity to work together to 'workshop' and problem-solve current complex cases. While the JCR Program incorporates elements of the latter, it was not well understood among some participants that the purpose of discussing complex cases (which were often a combination of historical cases, potentially with hypothetical elements) was to achieve the former. The name of the Program, 'Joint Case Review' seemed to add to this misunderstanding.

Where respondents primarily viewed the purpose of the JCRs as an opportunity to problem-solve current complex cases, they were more likely to have become disengaged with the Program, and expressed higher levels of frustration that the Program did not meet their expectations. This highlights issues with the ways that the purpose and intended outcomes of the Program is communicated to the intended audience.

"They don't share the information that you ask - we are not getting the full story so we can't think of feasible solutions... There should just be a 'what is said in the room stays in the room'. It's frustrating because you can't reach an outcome. We're only getting half the information - how can you learn from another organisation if you don't get the full picture? There is no closure - you don't know what's real, what's not, what's mixed." [Interview participant]

"...it feels like a circle conversation, never really getting anywhere or making meaningful ground. I never leave the session feeling like it contributed to enhancing my practice or that it was a meaningful use of my time. It feels like half the session is full of questioning the case study provided, because of the limited information provided, and then hypothetically answering the questions based on all the hypothetical scenarios your group has come up with."
[CYFSP survey respondent]

[The purpose of the JCRs] "To increase our practice capacity through collaborative efforts - for the benefit of a client. The problem is that we don't all share the client/s in review. Therefore, we may not or may not need to follow through with intervention methods." [CYFSP survey respondent]

This perception about the purpose of the JCR was also evident among several respondents who had never attended a JCR session, who described the purpose of the Program as: for collaborative case management for vulnerable families, discussing the support requirements of

particular cases and responses from various stakeholders, and reviewing cases across organisations.

The most frequently used terms that respondents used to describe the purpose of the JCR Program included:

- Practice approaches and practice frameworks
- Collaboration
- Sharing knowledge
- Networking
- Consistent approaches
- Learning

Additional phrases included:

- Client-centred, client outcomes, client communication
- Case reviews and complex cases
- Strengths-based
- Reflection
- Shared / common language
- Identifying gaps
- Communication
- Confidence
- Critical thinking
- Higher standards
- Innovate
- Inform program design
- Problem-solving
- Self-awareness

It should be noted that 'safety', as it relates to children, young people and families, was not identified at all, by any respondents outside of the JCR Program Team, despite being an intended outcome of the Program. As a JCR Program team member described, "the emergence of the model came from catastrophic system failures in the UK - practice needs to be at the top of the list, to ensure the safety of children and people."

> *"To bring the sector together and share practices to provide more consistent service delivery across the entire sector. Shared understanding. Shared language. Also to foster relationships." [CYFSP survey respondent]*

> *"Assisting practitioners to more deeply reflect on the work they are doing, and the thoughts, feelings, and biases they bring. It is also designed to assist practitioners to avoid diving into problem-solving mode when they don't have the full context and have not fully grasped why a service user's decisions made sense for them. Finally, a key benefit is sharing knowledge and developing a*

common language and approach as it relates to supporting individuals and
families, particularly within CYFSP." [Facilitator survey respondent]

Across both the interviews and surveys, there was some confusion about the background and broader intent or 'agenda' of the JCR Program, including who funded the Program and how it had come about historically. This created confusion about what the intent of the Program was, such as whether it was about supporting professional development of frontline practitioners, or was linked to an unknown 'CYFSP agenda'.

1.2.4 What were the barriers and enablers experienced by the intended audience(s) to participate in the Program?

Respondents cited a range of barriers that impacted on their participation in the JCR Program, which fell into the following broad categories:

- Competing work responsibilities
- Previous experiencing attending JCRs
- External logistical barriers
- Internal organisational barriers

Each of these categories is discussed further below.

Competing work responsibilities

Challenges relating to competing work responsibilities was the most frequently cited barrier to participation in the JCR Program. Respondents cited high case-loads; as well as client appointments, commitments and emergencies, as frequent barriers. This was exacerbated if practitioners worked part-time, or were trying to make time for other professional development opportunities and study as well.

"I usually have it marked in my calendar but have to back out due to whole of organisation events, or because things are particularly tricky with a number of my clients. It's so unfortunate when that happens." [CYFSP survey respondent]

"Regular availability, as I participate in professional development studies as well, I am trying to maximise the hours for client contact."
[CYFSP survey respondent]

"Client emergencies and working part time can limit the time for participation."
[CYFSP survey respondent]

Some participants identified that scheduling clashes were sometimes due to 'short notice' about the JCR sessions. This was repeatedly identified as an issue, as well as some respondents

identifying that they did not receive invitations to attend. This is further discussed in Section 1.2.5.

"Sometimes the time or the short notice, usually we know about them well in advance but if the notice is too close to the JCR often my calendar is already full." [CYFSP survey respondent]

Previous experiences attending JCRs

Some respondents described previously negative experiences attending JCRs that prevented them from wanting to return; and others reflected on the negative experiences of their colleagues. These related particularly to problematic dynamics among participants during sessions, as well as frustrations with the format or purpose of JCRs (see Section 1.2.3 for further information relating to perceptions about the purpose of JCRs).

Group dynamics during JCR sessions appeared to have a strong influence on whether a participant had a positive or negative experience and were willing to return. Some respondents identified feeling judged by peers when they were trying to be vulnerable, had witnessed eye-rolling from workers in other teams, or did not feel comfortable speaking up. One respondent also discussed the difficulties of participating if the session was 'top heavy with management'.

"The main reason I have stopped is because of the judgement and passive aggressive culture I have observed within the JCR setting. The JCR is proclaimed to be a "safe space" to discuss practice, and reflect on our own past short-comings or mindsets that may hinder best practice. However, what I have observed and experienced, is that this safe non-judgemental space does not exist. Instead, if someone speaks up and vulnerably shares a shortcoming they have learnt from, it is often snickered at by others, either directly or indirectly through silence, eye-rolls or stares to other team members, binding them together on the same judgement of what said person said." [CYFSP survey respondent]

"It feels like it is the battle of egos in the room. Everyone wants to be seen as the "best" and have the "best practice" and best "solutions", next to no one wants to be vulnerable or reflect on their internal unconscious thought patterns that may influence the way they interact or approach a client situation..." [CYFSP survey respondent]

In relation to the format of JCRs, some respondents discussed inconsistent approaches in delivery between northside and southside groups, a perceived lack of relevance to their work, and the repetitive nature of the format.

"I always get turned off by butcher's paper, maybe there is a better way and sometimes the facilitators are not clear with instructions and that can be difficult." [CYFSP survey respondent]

"They are a big time commitment and sometimes you find the same thing being said over and over." [CYFSP survey respondent]

External logistical barriers

External barriers identified by respondents included the amount of time required to participate, travel, and the loss of staff (to be available to attend to clients). Several respondents identified that they didn't receive enough notice or had not received an invitation to attend for some time (see Section 1.2.5).

"It ends up being a half day, when you include travel time." [Interview participant]

"It never occurs when I am available." [CYFSP survey respondent]

Internal organisational barriers

Internal organisational barriers identified by respondents included professional development being considered secondary to client work by both practitioners and managers, and a lack of prioritisation and commitment from managers and those in leadership positions to support staff to attend. This may be related to a limited understanding of the purpose of JCRs, but was also raised as a broader systemic issue. This is discussed in Section 2.2 and in the Outcome Evaluation.

"Depends on who your manager is." [Interview participant]

Enablers

Respondents identified that the primary enabler that supported them to participate in the JCR Program was when their manager or organisation valued and prioritised professional development. They also provided feedback about what contributed to positive experiences attending JCRS, including when there was a diverse mix of workers and services attending, when there were less managers and supervisors in the room, and when there was a networking component.

"[Organisation name] gives you time to think about the work you do - you're not chasing your tail. [Organisation name] values quality." [Interview participant]

"When there are less managers or supervisors." [CYFSP survey respondent]

"I enjoy attending, socialising and learning." [CYFSP survey respondent]

1.2.5 Why have some CYFSP practitioners and services not participated in the Program?

This evaluation question followed a concern raised by the JCR Program team that there were some CYFSP services that consistently did not participate in the JCR Program, a theory that was echoed by respondents in the surveys and interviews. It was not possible to verify the extent to which this was true through the attendance records, although recently some new people from other organisations had started to attend.

Respondents who were more engaged in the Program suggested a range of possible reasons why some practitioners and services might not attend. These included: that the Program may be considered to be less relevant to their particular type of service; that the internal leadership did not support or enable the participation of staff; that services might be averse to different ways of working; or that practitioners with higher qualifications may feel the Program is too basic.

"Some services never show up and you're constantly getting the same people and programs attending. It would be good if more services attended to broaden knowledge, networking and input." [CYFSP survey respondent]

"I feel there is not the same commitment across the agencies to attend. Some services set a high priority on the JCR and attend each session. I would like to see that consistent across the CYFSP." [Facilitator survey respondent]

As discussed in Section 1.2.4, respondents identified a range of barriers to participating in the JCR Program. Additionally, Section 1.2.3 discussed the differences in understanding among CYFSP services regarding the purpose of the JCR session, which influenced their level of engagement. While the evaluation did not have the opportunity to speak to every program and service that was less engaged in the Program, findings indicated gaps in communication processes to disseminate JCR information and invitations, as well as a perceived overlap with internal processes, which may prevent some services from participating.

Disseminating JCR information and invitations

Although dates for JCR sessions are set at the beginning of each calendar year, several respondents identified that 'not having enough notice' or 'not receiving an invitation' prevented them from participating in JCRs. Further to this, one facilitator indicated that due to a lack of coordinated oversight for communication, no one had checked to see what organisations were attending which sessions (e.g. northside, southside); and they had realised that some CYFSP services had never been specifically invited. The Program is currently reliant on facilitators

forwarding invitations through their own networks, and is not systematically promoted to all eligible CYFSP services and practitioners.

"Changed organisations and have not yet received any invitation to attend JCR." [CYFSP survey respondent]

One organisation had recently re-engaged with the JCR Program after a facilitator made contact and spent time talking with them about the purpose of the Program and invited them to participate. This program coordinator had otherwise not received information about the Program but was keen to attend after hearing more about it. Similar, one-to-one approaches may be effective in engaging with other organisations.

Perceived overlap with internal processes

One respondent identified that they had stopped attending JCRs because they felt it duplicated internal group supervision processes they had established within their organisation, in which teams of staff participate in group case reviews about current cases. As part of this internal process, a case-worker is nominated to develop a case-note about a client they are currently supporting, and small teams work together to identify potential courses of action, as well as issues that might not have been previously considered by the case-worker.

Benefits of this model were described as building internal relationships and collaboration, and working expertise. These groups meet on a regular basis, so there is the opportunity to revisit previously discussed cases and discuss what changes have occurred for those clients.

"Our organisation is holding group supervision and this seems to duplicate the intent of JCR." [CYFSP survey respondent]

This perceived overlap between the JCR Program and this organisation's internal group supervision process may speak to the divergence in perception among respondents about the purpose of JCRs as a current case review mechanism, rather than a professional development opportunity.

Other respondents reported that the JCR Program has helped to inform and strengthen their internal supervision processes and practices (see Section 2.1.6), which presents an opportunity for the JCR Program to better articulate how it can sit alongside internal supervision processes.

1.2.6 How satisfied are participants with their experience of the Program?

How satisfied participants were with the JCR Program appeared to depend on how well they understood the intended purpose of the Program, and their personal experiences with JCR sessions.

As discussed in Section 1.2.3, where respondents viewed the purpose of the JCR Program as an opportunity to workshop and problem-solve current complex cases, there was a higher level of frustration that the JCR Program did not meet their expectations. Where respondents viewed JCR sessions as an opportunity to engage in reflective practice and discuss ways of working more broadly, they appeared to find more value in the JCR Program.

"It has been the most concrete example of practice forums that I have witnessed/been involved in since the CYFSP was first implemented."
[Facilitator survey respondent]

"I have really enjoyed the experience and have loved being involved."
[CYFSP survey respondent]

"It's helpful and I hope it continues." [CYFSP survey respondent]

Respondents' personal experiences during JCR sessions related particularly to group dynamics. As described in Section 1.2.4, some participants had felt judged by other practitioners while trying to be vulnerable and either had stopped or intended to stop participating.

"In short, I have stopped attending the JCR sessions as I do not support or agree with the negative and unsupportive culture within the room." [CYFSP survey respondent]

Participant dynamics appeared to be influenced by the number of different organisations participating, the way the session was run, and the type of session (e.g. northside / southside; youth engagement / family case management). There were varying views among respondents about how well the different types of JCRs worked. For example, some felt that the youth engagement JCRs had stronger participation and engagement; while others felt that family case management services were more engaged and supportive of each other.

"[One JCR] started with a group conversation which didn't work because people dominated. But this was important learning and they split into little groups after that." [Interview participant]

1.3 What improvements could be made to the design and implementation of the Program?

The JCR Program has informally utilised an action learning approach since its commencement. Continuing to use this approach, supported by formal administrative procedures and oversight mechanisms, improved facilitator supports, and a continuous improvement approach to the

delivery of JCR sessions could continue to strengthen the JCR Program and support it to become more sustainable.

Improved administrative, communication and oversight procedures for the JCR program are necessary to provide clarity to the Program Coordinator and facilitators regarding their roles and responsibilities; and to enable these responsibilities to be better shared across the facilitator group. These procedures will also address existing gaps in communication and promotion, and improve consistency in planning and implementation of JCRs. Improved communication processes may assist the target audience to better understand the intended purpose of the Program and improve engagement. This could be achieved by developing detailed Program Guidelines that outline each of the key components, roles and procedures that support the implementation of a Program.

Depending on the scope of the roles and responsibilities of the Program Coordinator and facilitators, there may be value in considering resourcing and appointing a 'lead' facilitator to assist with coordination tasks. Other supports for facilitators include addressing their ongoing training and professional development needs, and formalising opportunities for all facilitators to share their ideas and contribute to the future strategic direction of the JCR Program.

JCR sessions could be strengthened through a focus on delivering a positive learning experience for participants; by encouraging a supportive peer environment and refining the format and delivery of the JCR sessions to promote learning. Ongoing action learning and evaluation methods in collaboration with participants will help the Program Coordinator and facilitators to more easily identify opportunities for continuous improvement.

Further detail is provided in the responses to the sub-questions below.

1.3.1 How could the administrative/logistics component of the Program be strengthened?

The administrative and logistical component of the Program could be strengthened through the development of formal administrative, communication and oversight / management procedures. Currently, oversight, planning and implementation processes are shared between the Program Coordinator and facilitators. However, there is a lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities of the Program Coordinator and facilitators in conducting these key tasks; and this has led to a small group of facilitators taking on greater responsibilities.

> *"It might be helpful to have someone who is charged specifically with oversight of JCR's." [Interview participant]*

The development of Program Guidelines for the JCR Program would assist in clarifying these roles and responsibilities, address communication issues and improve consistency in planning and implementation processes.

It would be beneficial for the JCR Program to:

- Clarify specific roles and responsibilities for the Program Coordinator and facilitators. This may include resourcing and appointing a 'lead' facilitator to assist with coordination.
- Develop a centralised email contact list of CYFSP practitioners and services, organised by both region and service type, to ensure that information and JCR invitations are systematically disseminated to all relevant stakeholders.
- Develop promotional materials that provide clear information about the intended purpose of the JCR and what practitioners can expect from participating. This could be made available through the Families ACT website, and include upcoming JCR dates.
- Develop procedures for:
  - Communication, including promotion, invitation dissemination
  - Record-keeping, including collecting and reviewing attendance records
  - Implementation of JCRs: including outlining the steps involved in hosting and facilitating a JCR session
  - Evaluation and monitoring processes with both facilitators and participants

Strengthening administrative and logistical components of the Program may assist in reducing the divergence in perceptions about the purpose of the JCR Program, and improve engagement with the intended audience.

1.3.2 How could processes to support facilitators be strengthened?

Strengthening formal administrative and logistical procedures is likely to improve support for facilitators, particularly those who have taken on greater responsibility for planning and conducting JCRs, by clearly outlining roles and responsibilities of the Program Coordinator and facilitators, and ensuring facilitator duties are shared across the group. Depending on the scope of the roles and responsibilities, there may be value in considering resourcing and appointing a 'lead' facilitator to assist with coordination.

The JCR Program would also benefit from considering the ongoing training and professional development needs of facilitators, beyond the initial formal training. This could include the development of shorter 'refresher' sessions, or build upon the existing debriefing sessions, to strengthen facilitators' understanding of the principles of the JCR Framework, and to further develop facilitation skills.

Alongside current debriefing sessions, there would be value in formalising opportunities for all facilitators to share their ideas and contribute to the future strategic direction of the JCR Program. This would include providing opportunities for facilitators to discuss ongoing and emerging issues; training and professional development needs; and monitor and respond to evaluation activities.

1.3.3 How could JCR sessions be strengthened?

JCR sessions could be strengthened through a focus on delivering a positive learning experience for participants, by promoting a supportive peer environment and revisiting the format and delivery of the JCR sessions. Ongoing action learning and evaluation methods in collaboration with participants will help the Program Coordinator and facilitators to more easily identify opportunities for continuous improvement.

Promoting a supportive peer environment

Several respondents described previous negative experiences during JCR sessions, which related particularly to participant dynamics, such as feeling judged by their peers, as well as frustrations with the format or purpose of the JCRs (discussed in Section 1.2.4).

Potential strategies to promote a supportive peer environment include:

- Establishing 'group rules' for JCR sessions: As part of the JCR session introduction, the facilitator should establish 'group rules' or key principles for participants to follow that will encourage supportive and safe group discussions. Group rules and principles might be related to trust, respect, active listening, supporting sharing, and confidentiality (when practitioners are sharing their own experiences). Ideally, a facilitator will be able to participate in each table-based group discussion, but where this is not possible, other experienced practitioners may be able to support positive discussions.

- Clearly articulating the purpose of the JCR sessions: As part of the JCR session introduction, the facilitator should remind participants of the purpose of JCR sessions, as a professional development exercise focused on deep learning and reflection. This may assist in mitigating confusion about the purpose of the session and promote constructive group discussion.

- Considering the strategic composition of small groups: Several respondents noted that smaller groups work better than large group discussions, but stated that these smaller groups also need to be supported. Respondents identified the need to aim for a mix of services at tables to promote networking and collaboration, and the possibility of placing newer practitioners at tables with practitioners who are more experienced with JCRs.

"Explaining the principles is really important … We need champions who are up to speed who can be trusted voices." [Interview Participant]

"…ensuring that groups rotate to get the benefit of the broad range of skills and knowledge in the room. Perhaps being assigned a number to designated groups or challenging people not to sit with any immediate co-workers where possible." [CYFSP survey respondent]

Several respondents had thoughts about how the format of the JCR sessions could be improved to promote learning. These related particularly to the use of case studies, the Practice Framework and Casework Reflective Tool, using multimedia, and providing information and education on specific topics.

It should be noted that the lack of consistency between JCR sessions in different regions was identified as a concern by some respondents. While it may be possible to build flexibility into the format and delivery of JCRs as discussed below, it would be important to identify which components should remain consistent.

- Case studies: There were a range of views relating to the use of case studies in JCR sessions. Some of these appeared related to how well respondents understood the purpose of the JCR Program, and whether they thought the case presented at each JCR session was an active, current case. Key issues included:

  - *Access to the case study prior to each JCR session:* While some respondents wanted to receive case studies in advance, there was concern that this might lead to participants trying to 'solve' the case prior to the session, rather than working collaboratively and reflectively to explore the issues in further detail.

  - *Contributing case studies for review:* Some respondents wanted all participants to be provided with an opportunity to contribute a case for review. There may be value in inviting participants to identify areas they would like to explore in future JCR sessions, potentially related to challenges they may be experiencing as a practitioner, or topics they would like to learn more about. This information could be collected from participants through session evaluation and feedback forms.

  - *Information provided within case studies:* Some respondents expressed frustration that the case studies did not provide more detailed information, which inhibited their ability to identify solutions. However, facilitators involved in the evaluation were clear that creating ambiguity in the case studies encouraged greater discussion about different perspectives and supported participants to 'go deeper'. This rationale may need to be better communicated to participants at JCR sessions.

  "We've tried to do them with lots of themes and current issues in the youth sector. Need to be focused on current trends but it also works well when it's disconnected from a particular worker." [Interview participant]

- Practice Framework and Casework Reflective Tool: Some respondents identified that it would be helpful to focus on a different principle or component of the Practice Framework at each session, in order to 'deep dive' into each area. It was thought that this

varying focus might also help to engage participants who felt that the sessions were repetitive, and could be promoted in advance.

"A focus on one particular area of the practice framework. Go in depth."
[CYFSP survey respondent]

- Use of multimedia: Several respondents identified that the use of multimedia would help the sessions to be more engaging and dynamic; and respond better to the various learning styles of participants. Ideas included PowerPoint or YouTube to present videos on specific topics, or having visual case studies.

- Provision of information / education: Some respondents identified that it would be helpful to include a brief information or education component in each JCR session that aligned with the topics being discussed in the case study (for example, alcohol and other drug use). This could also be used to provide education on the components of the Practice Framework. One respondent suggested that it would be helpful to hear reflective case studies from facilitators at the end of sessions: *"there is nothing quite like story-telling and the learnings that come from sharing."*

"So that the JCR's extend to strengthen practice not just by reflection and use of framework but also by educating." [CYFSP survey respondent]

Evaluation and feedback from participants

Developing ongoing, formal evaluation and feedback processes for both practitioners and facilitators will build on and strengthen the current action learning approaches that have informed the changes to the JCR Program since its commencement in 2017. This will support the Program Coordinator and facilitators to ensure that the Program is responsive to the professional development needs of the intended audience, and can monitor the impact of further changes to the Program. This is discussed in more detail in the following section.

1.3.4 How could the Program become more sustainable?

Some respondents were concerned about the future sustainability of the JCR Program, particularly in relation to the current reliance on a few key individuals to provide significant support to plan and implement the Program.

Establishing additional formal oversight, administrative and evaluation processes will support the JCR Program to become more sustainable and address the potential impact of turnover in key Program team and facilitator roles. This could be achieved through the development of comprehensive 'Program Guidelines' for the JCR Program. Program Guidelines detail the key components, roles and procedures that support the implementation of a Program.

In addition, the development of an ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the delivery of the JCR Program would support the Program Coordinator and facilitators to monitor how effectively the Program is implemented into the future, respond to emerging needs of the intended audience, and assess the impact of further changes over time. It may also be able to establish mechanisms to better assess whether the Program is achieving the intended outcomes. The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework should identify key questions and sub-questions, and link these to indicators and reliable sources of data, incorporating a continuous improvement approach. This will be especially valuable if the JCR Program invites services outside of the CYFSP in the future.

"We need to evaluate and learn from evaluation for the first 1-7 years and have a strong commitment, changing and modifying along the way." [Interview participant]

At a broader systemic level, the value and prioritisation of professional development by managers and services funded by the CYFSP was raised as a barrier to participation in both the JCR Program and to professional development in general. This may impact on the future sustainability of the JCR Program if practitioners are not enabled or supported by their organisations to attend. This is further discussed in Section 2.2 and in the Outcome Evaluation.

"Managers and Directors are interested in managing risk - this [the JCR Program] should be important. They need judgement to be as good as it can be." [Interview participant]

Discussion and Recommendations

Supporting the Program to become more sustainable and to better engage the intended audiences (both CYFSP practitioners and JCR facilitators) have been identified as primary concerns. How satisfied and engaged participants were with the JCR Program appeared to depend on their perceptions of the intended purpose of the Program, and their personal experiences with JCR sessions. These concerns are interlinked and may be addressed through improved administration, communication, oversight and evaluation processes that build on the action learning approach that has been used to date.

Communication addresses a range of the issues described above, including in relation to how well practitioners understood and engaged with the Program, and the gaps in promoting JCR sessions to services. This presents a straightforward opportunity to strengthen the Program.

There is also an interest in further expanding the intended audience beyond CYFSP services, in order to build cross-sector collaboration and improve the practice capacity of practitioners in other sectors. This needs to be carefully considered and well thought out in its approach. As a first step, there would be value in inviting community-based services that provide similar types of support to children, young people and families; noting that young people and families do not

access CYFSP services in isolation from other services. While potentially improving consistency in practice and language across the child, youth and family sector; this would also be of benefit to CYFSP programs by improving cross-sector collaboration and knowledge, and preventing the CYFSP from becoming siloed from other services.

Such services might include:
- Youth centres operating in Canberra and the surrounding region that do not receive CYFSP funding
- Youth housing and homelessness providers, including outreach programs
- Community-based out-of-home care services
- Community mental health and alcohol and other drug programs
- Community services supporting families affected by domestic and family violence
- Community services supporting specific population groups, such as migrant and refugee families, gender and sexuality diverse young people, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Recommendations

Recommendations are provided for the consideration of Families ACT, the JCR Program Coordinator, JCR facilitators and the CYFSP Workforce Development Sub-Committee.

Recommendation #1
Develop comprehensive Program Guidelines for the JCR Program, to detail key roles and responsibilities and describe administrative, communication and oversight procedures for the Program. The Program Guidelines should outline and include:
- Clear roles and responsibilities for the Program Coordinator and facilitators
- Formal training, professional development and support processes for facilitators
- Communication procedures relating to promotion and information dissemination
- Implementation of JCR sessions, including the steps involved in hosting and facilitating a JCR session
- Record-keeping processes, including for collecting and reviewing attendance records
- Evaluation and monitoring processes for both facilitators and participants
- Relevant templates and forms for use by the Program Coordinator and facilitators, such as evaluation/feedback forms, attendance sheets and session plans

Recommendation #2
Develop and implement a communication plan to assist CYFSP services to better understand the purpose of and improve engagement with the JCR Program. This should include:
- Creating promotional materials to clearly articulate the intended purpose of the JCR, what practitioners can expect from participating, and upcoming session dates.
- Promotional materials should be distributed to stakeholders but also made available through a central location, such as the Families ACT website. The JCR Program should be clearly branded as a Families ACT initiative, due to confusion about who runs the Program.

- Developing a centralised email contact list of CYFSP practitioners and services, organised by both region (northside / southside) and service type (case management, youth engagement), to ensure that JCR information and invitations are systematically disseminated to all relevant services.
- Individual approaches to services that have either not been invited or have become disengaged to discuss the purpose and benefits of the Program to their organisations, and to identify and address concerns or barriers.

Recommendation #3

Develop an ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the ongoing delivery of the JCR Program, to enable Families ACT, the Program Coordinator and facilitators to monitor how effectively the Program is implemented into the future; respond to emerging needs of the intended audience; assess the impact of further changes over time; and examine the feasibility of measuring outcomes. A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework should:

- Identify key questions and sub-questions linked to the JCR Program Logic, and link these to indicators and reliable sources of data
- Incorporate a continuous improvement approach that formalises the current action learning model

Recommendation #4

Strengthen formal supports for facilitators by clarifying roles and responsibilities, and ensuring that these are shared across the group. Depending on the scope of the responsibilities, there may be value in resourcing and appointing a 'lead' facilitator to undertake coordination tasks. Formal supports should be articulated in the Program Guidelines and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, and include:

- Ensuring that formal training to facilitators provides practical skills as well as theory, including focusing on the experience of facilitating a JCR
- Considering the ongoing training and professional development needs of facilitators, which may include 'refresher' sessions or build upon existing debriefing sessions
- Providing formal opportunities for facilitators to share ideas and contribute to the future strategic direction of the JCR Program

Recommendation #5

Focus on delivering a positive learning experience for participants, by promoting a supportive peer environment and revisiting the format and delivery of JCR sessions. This should also be articulated in the Program Guidelines and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. Strategies for consideration include:

- Establishing 'group rules' and principles during JCR session introductions to encourage supportive and safe discussions
- Clearly articulating the purpose of the JCR sessions during JCR session introductions to reduce confusion and promote constructive discussions
- Considering the strategic composition of small groups, aiming for a mix of services to promote networking and collaboration, and ensuring that each group includes a facilitator or practitioner who is experienced with JCRs.

- Inviting participants to identify areas they would like to explore in future case studies, which may relate to challenges they have experienced or topics they would like to learn more about.
- Focusing on a different component of the Practice Framework at each JCR session, to avoid repetition and increase deep-learning about the Practice Framework components
- Incorporating multimedia into JCRs to respond to different learning styles of participants
- Providing information or education related to the topics being discussed within the case study
- Developing formal evaluation mechanisms for participants to provide feedback about their experiences and identify areas for improvement.

Recommendation #6

Consider expanding the intended audience beyond CYFSP services, in order to build cross-sector collaboration and knowledge. While this needs to be considered in its approach, as a first step there would be value in inviting community-based services that provide similar types of support to children, young people and families; noting that young people and families do not access CYFSP services in isolation from other services. Such services might include:

- Youth centres in Canberra and the surrounding region that do not receive CYFSP funding
- Youth housing and homelessness providers, including outreach services
- Community-based out-of-home care services
- Community mental health and alcohol and other drug programs
- Community services supporting families affected by domestic and family violence
- Community services supporting specific population groups, such as migrant and refugee families, gender and sexuality diverse young people, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

2. Preliminary Outcome Evaluation

An outcome evaluation assesses how effectively a program has achieved its intended outcomes. It is difficult to measure outcomes with any degree of rigour for a program of this nature, with outcomes such as reflective practice, collaboration and information sharing. As such, the JCR Program evaluation included a preliminary outcome evaluation focused primarily on the intended short-term outcomes. As evaluation measures had not been established at the commencement of the Program, it was only feasible to collect data based on respondents' self-reported perceptions of how well the JCR Program had achieved the intended short-term outcomes.

Key evaluation questions for the outcome evaluation included:

1. To what extent has the Program delivered the intended outcomes?
2. Are there any other positive, negative or unintended outcomes?

2.1. To what extent has the Program delivered the intended outcomes?

This evaluation included a preliminary outcome evaluation focused primarily on the intended short-term outcomes. As evaluation measures were not established at the commencement of the Program, it was only feasible to collect data based on respondents' self-reported perceptions of how well the JCR Program had achieved the intended short-term outcomes. As such, findings need to be interpreted with caution.

Nearly all respondents agreed that the JCR Program has improved collaboration between practitioners and services, and improved a culture of sharing information and expertise. It is important to note that references to 'collaboration' in the qualitative data were often used interchangeably with 'networking'. References generally did not discuss how practitioners or services work together to support clients or deliver activities. This raises an unanswered question about whether the JCR Program does improve reflective practice focused on collaboration between practitioners and services.

The majority of respondents agreed that the JCR Program has improved their self-awareness and confidence as practitioners, and enhanced their value of the professional work of CYFSP practitioners. They described feeling more confident in their practice and in networking with other practitioners.

Approximately half of respondents agreed that the JCR Program has improved their reflective practice focused on problem-solving. Respondents discussed problem-solving in relation to both practice and the purpose of the JCR Program. Several respondents expressed a nuanced understanding of the different approaches to problem-solving in strengths-based, client-centred approaches. They identified that the JCRs helped them to develop different ideas and perspectives on how to tackle or resolve problems with clients or other service providers, as well as co-creating solutions with clients.

Approximately half of respondents also agreed that the JCR Program has helped them to develop new skills and knowledge, increased the use of strengths-based language, and established clearer communication between practitioners and services. Respondents described improved knowledge and skills from observing others' approaches, having an increased knowledge of other services, refreshing their case work skills and being able to identify the skill sets within their team as positive outcomes.

Only one-third of CYFSP survey respondents agreed that the JCR Program has improved their understanding of child, youth and family safety issues. Further to this, 'safety' as it relates to children, young people and families was not identified by any respondents outside of the JCR Program team in the qualitative data. As the reasons for this are not clear, this may warrant further discussion with participants at future JCR sessions, to identify their knowledge and professional development needs in this area.

While it is difficult to assess the impact of the JCR Program on the CYFSP and broader sector, feedback from respondents indicated that the implementation of the JCR Program alongside or in conjunction with other CYFSP initiatives (including the Service Improvement Project, Practice Framework and Casework Reflective Tool) have contributed to a broader positive impact. Respondents also identified that the CYFSP felt more connected and the JCR Program enabled networking opportunities across the CYFSP.

A small number of respondents identified that the JCR Program has informed the approaches and language used within their teams and organisations internally to discuss particular cases, both informally and within formal supervision. Some respondents said that they have 'mini JCRs' in their organisations, or that the JCR Program model is used in supervision. This appeared to occur most often when facilitators had the authorising environment to implement the principles and approaches of the JCR model within their own organisations. Where respondents perceived the purpose of the JCR Program to be about reviewing current complex cases, they were less likely to consider how it might align with and inform internal processes.

Further detail is provided in the responses to the sub-questions below.

2.1.1 What are the intended outcomes?

The short, medium and long-term intended outcomes are described in the Program Logic (see Attachment 2). The preliminary outcome evaluation looked primarily at short-term outcomes, which include:

- For practitioners and services:
  - Improved reflective practice focused on:
    - collaboration between practitioners and services
    - critical analysis and the opportunity to share creative solutions to complex problems
    - development of new skills and knowledge

- ■ ensuring practice reflects the principles and values of the Casework Reflective Tool
- ○ Increased use of strengths-based language to review and reflect on practice.
- ○ Improved confidence.
- ○ Enhanced value and purpose of the professional work of practitioners across the child, youth and family sector, acknowledging the complexity of the work and skills and knowledge required; and highlighting exemplary practice.
- ○ Improved culture of sharing information and expertise.
- ○ Increased self-awareness.
- ○ Improved judgement of child and youth safety issues.
- ○ Improved judgement of family safety issues.
- ○ Clearer lines of communication are established and developed between stakeholders.
- ● For the JCR Program:
  - ○ Improved capacity of practitioners to conduct and be involved in JCRs.

2.1.2 Have the intended outcomes of the Program changed?

The Program Logic was created as the first activity of the evaluation, in order to identify the theory of change and intended outcomes of the JCR Program. The Program Logic was based on existing documentation and consultation with the Program Team. As such, the intended outcomes have not changed, but more clearly distinguish between short, medium and long-term outcomes, and how they are interlinked.

2.1.3 Have JCRs made a positive difference to participants and their practice?

Of the 25 practitioners that responded to this question in the survey, over 60% (n=15) agreed or strongly agreed that the JCR Program had made a positive difference to their practice. Twenty-five percent (n=6) were 'neutral', and 3 respondents disagreed that it had made a difference. Of the 5 facilitators that completed the survey, 4 agreed or strongly agreed that it had made a positive difference, and one was neutral.

Respondents described being more outcomes-focused, more reflective, and less solution focused. One respondent described, "*it slowed down the way that we work.*"

"I am not as hasty. I am much more lucid in interactions with participants."
[Facilitator survey respondent]

"The way that I interact with families, my whole approach. Understanding that there is no prescriptive method of case work that everyone is different."
[CYFSP survey respondent]

"Strengths-based practice in real life is difficult. JCRs helped me to understand my own motives. To move away from 'let's fix this'... It helped to take stock of where people are at - not just trying to get the wins, because then it becomes about you not them." [Interview participant]

2.1.4 To what extent has the Program achieved the intended short-term outcomes?

Improved practitioners' reflective practice

This outcome related to reflective practice focused on collaboration between practitioners and services, critical analysis and the opportunity to share creative solutions to complex problems, the development of new skills and knowledge, and ensuring practice reflects the principles and values of the Casework Reflective Tool.

In a session evaluation of the combined JCR session held in December 2019, 10 practitioners responded to the question 'has participating in JCRs assisted you with being more reflective about your work?' with 'Good', and 3 practitioners selected 'Excellent'. Two practitioners identified 'Average', one practitioner selected 'somewhat', and one practitioner said 'not at all'.

Several respondents described improved reflective practice in both the surveys and interviews, including within their own organisational teams.

"More reflection, looking at deeper meaning." [CYFSP survey respondent]

"Has made us more reflective, we use the principles within our team, not just in supervision but in team discussions." [Interview participant]

Collaboration

Eighty percent (n=20) of practitioners that completed the survey, and four out of five facilitators, agreed or strongly agreed that the JCR Program had improved collaboration between practitioners and services. Three practitioners and one facilitator were neutral, and two practitioners disagreed.

"I think I have taken on a bit more of a mentor role in my workplace as a result of JCR and I have also built new connections at the JCRs that promote collaborative practice." [CYFSP survey respondent]

It should be noted that in the qualitative data, while there were several references to 'collaboration', only one respondent described that the JCRs had contributed to youth services collaborating more on ideas. Respondents frequently spoke about networking and collaboration interchangeably, but did not refer to how practitioners or services work together to support clients or deliver activities. While networking is a factor that supports collaboration, this raises a question about the extent to which the JCR Program has objectively contributed to improved collaboration between practitioners and services. As one respondent described:

"There is a social aspect - it makes people friendlier with each other and improves networking, warm referrals between services. But does it actually increase organisational collaboration?" [Interview participant]

Problem-solving

Over 50% (n=13) of practitioners that completed the survey, and three out of five facilitators, agreed or strongly agreed that the JCR Program had improved problem-solving. Nearly 30% of practitioners and one facilitator were neutral, and 4 practitioners disagreed.

Respondents discussed problem-solving in relation to both practice and the purpose of the JCR Program. Several respondents expressed a nuanced understanding of the different approaches to problem-solving in strengths-based, client-centred approaches. They identified that the JCRs helped them to develop different ideas and perspectives on how to tackle or resolve problems with clients or other service providers, as well as co-creating solutions with clients.

"We wait for young people to identify their self-identified goals. We are not as solution-driven." [Interview participant]

"It's a good opportunity to utilise others' experiences when trying to resolve new issues either with clients or CYPS." [CYFSP survey respondent]

"I now have an increased acceptance of the fact that change is slow and it's the nature of the job, not to expect quick fixes in most instances. Some practical problems can be fixed quickly but most take time and patience." [CYFSP survey respondent]

New skills and knowledge

Over 55% (n=14) of practitioners that completed the survey, and four out of five practitioners, agreed or strongly agreed that the JCR Program had helped them to develop new skills and knowledge. A further 40% (n=10) were neutral, and 2 practitioners and facilitators disagreed.

Respondents described improved knowledge and skills from observing others' approaches, having an increased knowledge of other services, refreshing their case work skills and being able to identify the skill sets within their team. One respondent identified that the JCR Program had enhanced their understanding of creative ways to engage with young people.

"New knowledge of others' approaches, by observation and discussion at JCR." [CYFSP survey respondent]

Casework Reflective Tool

The Casework Reflective Tool was not specifically referenced in the survey, as it had only recently been released as part of the Practice Framework. However, several respondents

provided reference to the Practice Framework in their responses, describing that the JCR Program helped them to keep the Practice Framework in mind, and highlighted the links between the Practice Framework and their practice.

"It gave us a different way of looking at the work we do, linked to the Framework - 99% of work we did was bandaids / spot-fires." [Interview participant]

"The JCR keeps the Practice Framework at the forefront of my mind which is a positive. However I do not think the JCR's themselves have improved or changed my practice." [CYFSP survey respondent]

"Assists to ensure cases are looked at 'holistically' and in the best interest of the client - meeting Framework." [CYFSP survey respondent]

Increased use of strengths-based language

Over 55% (n=14) of practitioners that completed the survey and four out of five practitioners agreed or strongly agreed that the JCR Program had increased their use of strengths-based language. Eight practitioners and one facilitator were neutral, and 3 practitioners disagreed.

Several respondents described the value of having a common language and strengths-based approach, both within teams and across the CYFSP.

"Really like the strengths-based approach and common language, which is especially being used in the youth engagement teams." [Interview participant]

"...a key benefit is sharing knowledge and developing a common language and approach as it relates to supporting individuals and families, particularly within CYFSP." [Facilitator survey respondent]

"More consistency across practices and improved the service delivery language." [CYFSP survey respondent]

Improved practitioners' self-awareness and confidence

Sixty-four percent (n=16) of practitioners that completed the survey, and four out of five facilitators, agreed or strongly agreed that the JCR program had improved their self-awareness and confidence as practitioners. Twenty-eight percent (n=7) of practitioners and 1 facilitator were neutral, and two practitioners disagreed.

In a session evaluation of the combined JCR session held in December 2019, 11 practitioners responded to the question 'has participating in JCRs improved your confidence in casework practice?' with 'Confident', 2 practitioners selected 'Very confident', 4 practitioners selected 'Relatively confident' and 1 practitioner selected 'Not confident at all'.

Respondents described that they were more confident in their own practice, and in networking with other practitioners.

"Confidence and knowledge of services. I feel more confident in networking now, as I can see that the fear of this is very common."
[CYFSP survey respondent]

"Confidence that I am doing the right thing." [CYFSP survey respondent]

Enhanced value of the professional work of CYFSP practitioners

Over 70% (n=18) of practitioners that completed the survey, and three out of five facilitators agreed or strongly agreed that the JCR Program had enhanced their value of the professional work of CYFSP practitioners. Twenty percent of practitioners and one facilitator were neutral. Two participants and one facilitator disagreed.

"Where it is now as compared to a few years ago - there is more professionalism - people understanding what they're trying to do."
[Interview participant]

"It has changed the idea that 'we're just youth workers' - team members don't just work with young people now but will also communicate with parents."
[Interview participant]

Improved culture of sharing information and expertise

Eighty-eight percent (n=22) of practitioners that completed the survey, and three out of five facilitators, agreed or strongly agreed that the JCR Program had improved a culture of sharing information and expertise. Two practitioners and one facilitator were neutral, and 1 practitioner disagreed. Respondents described the benefits of being able to share ideas, perspectives and learn from others.

It should be noted that some participants described negative experiences and a 'negative culture', in which they felt judged by peers when trying to be vulnerable, had witnessed eye-rolling from workers in other teams, or did not feel comfortable speaking up. Some respondents also discussed the difficulties of participating if the session was 'top heavy with management' (see Section 1.2.4). While the JCR Program appears to improve sharing of information, expertise and knowledge for some participants, further work is necessary to promote a supportive peer environment. This is discussed further in Section 1.3.3.

"I think it's good to get ideas from more experienced practitioners." [CYFSP survey respondent]

"The main reason I have stopped is because of the judgement and passive aggressive culture I have observed within the JCR setting. The JCR is proclaimed to be a "safe space" to discuss practice, and reflect on our own past short-comings or mindsets that may hinder best practice. However, what I have observed and experienced, is that this safe non-judgemental space does not exist." [CYFSP survey respondent]

Improved understanding of child, youth and family safety issues

Only thirty-six percent (n=9) of practitioners that completed the survey, and all five facilitators agreed or strongly agreed that the JCR Program had improved their understanding of child, youth and family safety issues. Over 50% of practitioners were neutral, and three practitioners disagreed.

As identified in Section 1.2.3, 'child and youth safety', and 'family safety', was not discussed at all in the qualitative data, by any respondents outside of the JCR Program Team. The reasons for and implications of this are not clear. This may warrant further discussion with participants at future JCR sessions, to identify their knowledge and professional development needs in this area.

Established clearer communication between practitioners and services

Over 50% (n=13) of practitioners that completed the survey, and three out of five facilitators agreed or strongly agreed that the JCR Program had established clearer communication between practitioners and services. Thirty-six percent (n=9) of practitioners and two facilitators were neutral, and 3 practitioners disagreed.

While respondents did not specifically discuss 'communication' in their survey or interview responses, there was a strong emphasis on networking and meeting other services as a benefit of the JCR Program.

Improved practitioners' capacity to conduct and be involved in JCRs

Due to a technical issue with the survey tool, data was unable to be collected for this short-term outcome. Respondents also did not specifically discuss, in the qualitative components of the evaluation, whether their capacity to conduct and be involved in JCRs had improved.

2.1.5 What is the impact of the Program on the CYFSP and broader sector?

It is difficult to assess the impact of the JCR Program on the CYFSP and broader sector, as a full outcome evaluation cannot be completed. Not all CYFSP services have participated in the Program, for a range of reasons (see section 1.2.5); and services outside of the CYFSP are not currently invited to participate. However, feedback from respondents pointed towards the JCR Program being implemented alongside or in conjunction with other initiatives occurring within the CYFSP, as contributing to a broader positive impact.

"The mix of initiatives (JCRs, Service Improvement Project, Casework Tool) is why the CYFSP is miles ahead of other sectors." [Interview participant]

Respondents also identified that the CYFSP felt more connected and the JCR Program enabled networking opportunities across the CYFSP. While 'networking' is not an explicit outcome of the JCR Program (as distinct from collaboration), many respondents discussed the benefits of having opportunities to meet other workers and learn about their services through the JCR Program. Combined whole-of-ACT JCRs were seen to have been helpful for 'cross-pollination'. It was also identified that the JCR Program provided an opportunity for case management teams to network, noting that the Youth Worker Practice Network exists as a separate opportunity for youth workers to get together.

"There are less opportunities for case management teams to network than youth engagement... (Youth Worker Practice Network, school holiday programs). The youth workers already have relationships across services." [Interview participant]

"CYFSP is more connected." [Interview participant]

In relation to the impact of the Program on the broader sector, services outside of the CYFSP are not currently invited to participate; however, there is an interest in expanding the target audience to build cross-sector collaboration and improve the practice capacity of practitioners in other sectors. It would be of benefit to both the CYFSP and the broader child, youth and family sector to consider extending the Program to invite community-based services that provide similar types of support to children, young people and families. This was discussed in the Process Evaluation (see Section 1.1.7 and the Discussion and Recommendations).

2.1.6 Has the Program impacted upon or informed other forms of internal supervision and professional development for practitioners?

Over 80% of survey respondents identified that the JCR Program had not replaced or informed the way that supervision or professional development was provided in their organisations.

Those respondents who reported that it had, described that the JCR Program had informed the approaches and language used within their teams and organisations internally to discuss particular cases, both informally and within formal supervision. Some respondents said that they have 'mini JCRs' in their organisations, or that the JCR Program model is used in supervision. This appeared to occur most often when facilitators (many of whom are also team leaders) had the authorising environment to implement the principles and approaches of the JCR model within their own organisations.

"We use the JCR program model in supervision, and elements of the casework tool at every supervision. It has not replaced but informed the way that supervision is provided." [Interview participant]

"Has made us more reflective, we use the principles within our team, not just in supervision but in team discussions… "Peer policing" in conversations - the JCR process might come up when talking about a young person." [Interview participant]

"When I was managing a team, I found the JCR would come up in a lot of supervision and team chats with staff. A more common language has become consistent across our team." [Facilitator survey respondent]

"It encourages me to have conversations within my team." [CYFSP survey respondent]

Where respondents did not understand the purpose of the JCR Program, they were less likely to consider how it might align with and inform internal processes. As identified in Section 1.2.5, one respondent said their organisation did not participate in the JCR Program because they felt it duplicated the existing group supervision model established within their organisation.

"Our organisation is holding group supervision and this seems to duplicate the intent of JCR's." [CYFSP survey respondent]

"My role/s are usually management and although I am involved indirectly through case management meetings and supervision, I have had no need to attend a JCR." [CYFSP survey respondent]

It may be beneficial for the JCR Program to more explicitly articulate how the JCR Program can work alongside and inform both informal and formal processes within organisations. For those in middle or higher management within organisations; noting that some respondents did not feel comfortable with management attending JCR sessions, this might be achieved by presenting information separately or through other forums, about how the JCR principles can be applied to strengthen internal processes.

2.2. Are there any other positive, negative or unintended consequences?

Unintended consequences related to networking opportunities, practitioner self-care, and practice leadership. More broadly, professional development repeatedly emerged as a related theme.

2.2.1 Networking opportunities

While 'networking' is not an explicit outcome of the JCR Program (as distinct from collaboration), many respondents discussed the benefits of having opportunities to meet other workers and

learn about their services through the JCR Program, identifying it as a positive outcome in its own right, in addition to potentially contributing to collaboration.

As discussed in Section 2.1.5, it was noted that the JCR Program provided an opportunity for case management teams to network, as youth workers also have the Youth Worker Practice Network as another opportunity to get together.

"Just being able to talk face to face with other workers and building networks." [CYFSP survey respondent]

"The JCR also provides an opportunity for us to network. I have personally met people I had been emailing with for months in the JCR - it is lovely to get to put a face to the name, and wonderful for building community and camaraderie amongst industry practitioners." [CYFSP survey respondent]

2.2.2 Practitioner self-care

Strongly associated with networking, respondents also identified practitioner self-care as a positive outcome of the JCR Program. This related to being able to spend time with other workers, sharing and listening to their experiences.

"I thoroughly enjoy the time and get good benefit out of it. Sometimes just to be in a room of people with shared experience can be therapeutic." [CYFSP survey respondent]

"Building support networks across the sector for self-care, not just client-care." [CYFSP survey respondent]

2.2.3 Practice leadership

Respondents described that the 'train the trainer' model of the JCR Program, in which team leaders and practitioners are supported to become facilitators, has further enabled these individuals to become 'practice leaders' within the CYFSP. One respondent suggested that the emergence of these practice leaders could lead a cultural shift in research translation, by enabling practice leaders to support the promotion of new practice-based knowledge and evidence.

"It has also shaken out some significant practice leaders who wouldn't have had the opportunity otherwise." [Interview participant]

"I think I have taken on a bit more of a mentor role in my workplace as a result of JCR." [CYFSP survey respondent]

2.2.4 Professional development across the CYFSP

Professional development across the CYFSP sector repeatedly emerged as a related theme discussed by evaluation respondents, outside of the JCR Program. This included discussions about the extent to which professional development is valued, prioritised and supported by managers and within organisations; and was identified as a barrier to participating in both the JCR Program and in professional development opportunities more broadly.

Some respondents felt that ongoing professional development needed to be more systematically embedded across the sector, to improve the base level of case work skills. One respondent identified that it could link to the ACT Government's shift towards commissioning for social impact.

"We need a curriculum to professionalise the workforce... access to online training and core units that go across sectors." [Interview participant]

"Professional development can't be compliance based, or based on the number of hours - it has to be like a compact. We need to clearly articulate, why do we need to be doing this? You wouldn't see a doctor who hadn't done any professional development since medical school." [Interview participant]

Discussion and Recommendations

The preliminary outcome evaluation focused primarily on the intended short-term outcomes. As evaluation measures had not been established at the commencement of the Program, it was only feasible to collect data based on respondents' self-reported perceptions of how well the JCR Program had achieved the intended short-term outcomes.

The preliminary outcome evaluation found that some short-term outcomes resonated more strongly with respondents than others. In particular, respondents felt that the JCR Program had improved a culture of sharing information and expertise, and improved collaboration between practitioners and services. However, 'networking' and 'collaboration' was often used interchangeably by respondents, and rarely referred to changes in practitioners or services working together to support clients or deliver activities. While networking may support and lead to collaboration, whether or not the JCR Program has led to improved reflective practice focused on collaboration may warrant further investigation, or could be a focus point for future JCR sessions. Likewise, while the Program appears to improve sharing of information, expertise and knowledge for some participants, further work is necessary to promote a supportive peer environment (discussed in Section 1.3.3).

Only one-third of CYFSP survey respondents agreed that the JCR Program had improved their understanding of child, youth and family safety issues. Further to this, as described in Section 1.2.3, 'safety' as it relates to children, young people and families was not identified by any respondents outside of the JCR Program team. As the reasons for and implications of this are

not clear, further discussion with participants at future JCR sessions may assist to identify their knowledge and professional development needs in this area.

In relation to the impact of the JCR Program on the broader sector, services outside of the CYFSP are not currently invited to participate; however, there is an interest in expanding the target audience to build cross-sector collaboration and improve the practice capacity of practitioners in other sectors. It would be of benefit to both the CYFSP and the broader child, youth and family sector to consider extending the Program to invite community-based services that provide similar types of support to children, young people and families. This was discussed in the Process Evaluation (see Section 1.1.7 and the Discussion and Recommendations).

A small number of respondents identified that the JCR Program had informed the approaches and language used within their teams and organisations internally to discuss particular cases, both informally and within formal supervision. This appeared to occur most often when facilitators (many of whom are also team leaders) had the authorising environment to implement the principles and approaches of the JCR model within their own organisations.

Where respondents perceived the purpose of the JCR Program to be about reviewing current complex cases, they were less likely to consider how it might align with and inform internal processes. It may be beneficial for the JCR Program to more explicitly articulate how the JCR Program can work alongside and inform both informal and formal processes within organisations.

Recommendations

These recommendations are interlinked with the recommendations in the Process Evaluation and should not be read in isolation.

Recommendation #7
Clarify the meaning and intention of including 'collaboration between practitioners and services' as an outcome of the JCR Program, and how this is addressed within JCR sessions to build a shared understanding of what this means and looks like in practice. It would then be beneficial for facilitators to lead discussions with participants about what collaboration looks like in the delivery of programs and client support, and to identify how the JCR Program can support practitioners to implement collaboration outside of JCRs.

Recommendation #8
Enhance a focus in the JCR Program and within sessions on child, youth and family safety. It may be beneficial for facilitators to lead discussions with participants to explore the reasons why this outcome did not resonate with respondents, and to identify how their professional development needs in this area can be better supported.

Recommendation #9
Articulate to CYFSP services how the JCR Program can work alongside and inform both informal and formal supervision and professional development processes within organisations. This may be included in the communication plan and in key Program materials, be explained to

participants during JCR sessions, and communicated to CYFSP managers and services in forums outside of the JCR sessions.

Recommendation #10
At a systemic level, the CYFSP needs to identify strategies to ensure that professional development for practitioners is valued, prioritised and enabled by managers and within organisations.

Conclusion

The evaluation found that the JCR Program is a valuable professional development opportunity for practitioners supporting children, young people and families, with potential for improvement. Improved procedures related to administration, communication and oversight, will build on the current strengths of the Program, improve audience engagement, and make the JCR Program more sustainable.

ATTACHMENT 1: EVALUATION FRAMEWORK: JOINT CASE REVIEW PROGRAM

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	SUB EVALUATION QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	DATA COLLECTION
PROCESS EVALUATION			
To what extent was the Program implemented as intended?	What was intended to be achieved? What were the intended activities? Is the Program based on evidence? What activities and processes have been implemented as part of the Program? What changes have been made to the delivery and outcomes of the Program? Why were the changes made? What is the intended future of the program?	The extent to which the Program documented the intended aim, activities and processes of the JCRs. The extent to which the Program has recorded the activities and processes implemented since commencement. The extent to which the Program documentation has been informed by references and sources describing the rationale, processes and outcomes of JCRs. The extent to which the Program has documented changes made to the delivery and outcomes of the JCRs since commencement. The perceptions and views of the JCR Program team regarding the intended aim, activities and processes, and changes made to the Program since commencement, and the intended future of the program; and the extent to which these match against the Program documentation. The perceptions and views of JCR facilitators and participants regarding the intended aim, activities and processes, changes made to the Program since commencement; and the extent to which these match against the Program documentation.	Analysis of documentation review, including JCR session plans. Engagement with JCR Evaluation Reference Group. Stakeholder survey Stakeholder interviews Previous evaluation data
To what extent did the Program engage the intended audience?	Who is the intended audience(s)?	The extent to which the Program has documented who the intended audience(s) of the JCRs is. The perceptions and views of the JCR Program team regarding the intended audience of the JCRs. The perceptions and views of the facilitators regarding the intended audience of the JCRs. The perceptions and views of participants and potential participants in the CYFSP regarding the intended audiences of the JCRs.	Analysis of documentation review, including attendance records Engagement with JCR Evaluation Reference Group. Stakeholder survey Stakeholder interviews

		How were Program facilitators identified and recruited? To what extent did initial and ongoing training and professional development opportunities provided to facilitators support them to implement their role? What barriers and enablers did facilitators experience to participating?	The extent to which the Program has documented the methods for identifying and recruiting facilitators. The perceptions and views of the JCR Program team regarding the methods for identifying and recruiting facilitators; the extent to which training and professional development supported them in their roles; and the barriers and enablers experienced by facilitators. The perceptions and views of the facilitators regarding how and why they were recruited to become facilitators; the extent to which training and professional development supported them in their roles; and the barriers and enablers they have experienced as facilitators. # Retention and participation rates of facilitators during the Program implementation period.	Previous evaluation data
		To what extent did the intended audience(s) know and understand the purpose of the Program?	The perceptions and views of the intended audience(s) regarding their level of awareness of the purpose of the Program. The perceptions and views of facilitators regarding the extent to which the intended audience(s) knew and understood the purpose of the Program. The extent to which the Program has documented methods of communication and engagement with the intended audience(s) to promote the JCRs. The perceptions and views of the JCR Program team regarding the methods of communication and engagement with the intended audience(s) to promote the JCRs; and the extent to which the intended audience(s) knew and understood the purpose of the Program. The perceptions and views of services that have not participated in the Program regarding their understanding of the purpose and value of the JCRs and reasons for not participating.	
		What were the barriers and enablers experienced by the intended audience(s) to participate in the Program?	The perceptions and views of the JCR Program team regarding the barriers and enablers experienced by the intended audience(s) to participating in the Program. The perceptions and experiences of participants and potential participants regarding the barriers and enablers to participating in the Program. The perceptions and views of facilitators regarding the barriers and enablers for the intended audience(s) to participate in the Program. # Rates of attendance by participants over the Program implementation period.	

	Why have some CYFSP practitioners and services not participated in the Program?	The perceptions and views of the JCR Program team regarding the reasons why some CYFSP practitioners and services have not participated in the Program. The perceptions and views of the facilitators regarding the reasons why some CYFSP practitioners and services have not participated in the Program. The perceptions and views of participants regarding the reasons why some CYFSP practitioners and services have not participated in the Program. The perceptions and views of services that have not participated in the Program regarding their understanding of the purpose and value of the JCRs and reasons for not participating.	
	How satisfied are participants with their experience of the Program?	The perceptions and views of participants regarding the value and benefits they have received from participating in the Program. The perceptions and views of facilitators regarding the value and benefits that they and participants receive from participating in the Program.	
What improvements could be made to the design and implementation of the Program?	How could the administrative/logistics component of the Program be strengthened? What are the barriers and enablers to doing this? How could processes to support facilitators be strengthened? What are the barriers and enablers to doing this? How could JCR sessions be strengthened? What are the barriers and enablers to doing this?	The extent to which the Program has documented the administrative/logistics activities and processes conducted as part of the Program. The extent to which the Program has documented the processes in place to support facilitators. The extent to which the Program has documented the processes in place to implement JCR sessions. The perceptions and views of the JCR Program team regarding the ways in which the administrative/logistics component; processes to support facilitators; and JCR sessions could be strengthened, and the barriers and enablers to doing this. The perceptions and views of the facilitators regarding the ways in which the administrative/logistics component; processes to support facilitators; and JCR sessions could be strengthened. The perceptions and views of the participants regarding the ways in which the JCR Program could be strengthened.	Analysis of documentation review, including attendance records Engagement with JCR Evaluation Reference Group. Stakeholder survey Stakeholder interviews Previous evaluation data

| | How could the Program become more sustainable? | The perceptions and views of the JCR Program team regarding the ways in which the Program could become more sustainable.

The perceptions and views of the facilitators regarding the ways in which the Program could become more sustainable.

The perceptions and views of the participants regarding the ways in which the Program could become more sustainable. | |

OUTCOME EVALUATION			
To what extent has the Program delivered the intended outcomes?	What are the intended outcomes? Have the intended outcomes of the Program changed?	The extent to which the Program documented the intended outcomes of the Program. The perceptions and views of the JCR Program team regarding the intended outcomes of the Program, and the extent to which these match against the Program documentation, or have changed since commencement of the program. The perceptions and views of facilitators and participants regarding what they believe the outcomes of the Program are.	Analysis of documentation review, including attendance records Engagement with JCR Evaluation Reference Group. Stakeholder survey Stakeholder interviews Previous evaluation data
	Have JCRs made a positive difference to participants and their practice?	The extent to which participants and facilitators report that the JCRs have made a positive difference to their practice.	
	To what extent has the Program: Improved practitioners' reflective practice focused on: collaboration between practitioners and services? critical analysis and the opportunity to share creative solutions to complex problems? development of new skills and knowledge?	The extent to which participants and facilitators report that the Program has improved their reflective practice focused on: collaboration between practitioners and services critical analysis and the opportunity to share creative solutions to complex problems development of new skills and knowledge ensuring practice reflects the principles and values of the Casework Reflective Tool The extent to which participants and facilitators report that the Program has increased the use of strengths-based language to review and reflect on practice.	

ensuring practice reflects the principles and values of the Casework Reflective Tool? Increased the use of strengths-based language to review and reflect on practice? Improved practitioner confidence? Enhanced the value and purpose of the professional work of practitioners across the child, youth and family sector? Led to an improved culture of sharing information and expertise? Increased practitioner self-awareness? Improved practitioners' judgement of child and youth safety issues? Improved practitioners' judgement of family safety issues? Established and developed clearer lines of communication between stakeholders? Improved practitioners' capacity to conduct and be involved in JCRs?	The extent to which participants and facilitators report that the Program has improved practitioner confidence. The extent to which participants and facilitators report that the Program has enhanced the value and purpose of the professional work of practitioners across the child, youth and family sector. The extent to which participants and facilitators report that the Program has led to an improved culture of sharing information and expertise. The extent to which participants and facilitators report that the Program has increased their self-awareness. The extent to which participants and facilitators report that the Program has improved their judgement of child and youth safety issues. The extent to which participants and facilitators report that the Program has improved their judgement of family safety issues. The extent to which participants and facilitators report that the Program has established and developed clearer lines of communication between stakeholders. The extent to which participants and facilitators report that the Program has improved practitioners' capacity to conduct and be involved in JCRs.	
	What is the impact of the Program on the CYFSP and broader sector?	The extent to which the Program has documented the impact of the Program on the CYFSP and broader sector. The perceptions and views of the JCR Program team regarding the impact of the Program on the CYFSP and broader sector. The perceptions and views of the facilitators regarding the impact of the Program on the CYFSP and broader sector. The perceptions and views of the participants regarding the impact of the Program on the CYFSP and broader sector.	

	Has the Program impacted upon or informed other forms of internal supervision and professional development for practitioners?	The perceptions and views of facilitators regarding the extent to which the Program has impacted upon or informed other forms of internal supervision and professional development for practitioners.	
		The perceptions and views of participants and potential participants regarding the extent to which the Program has impacted upon or informed other forms of internal supervision and professional development for practitioners.	
Are there any other positive, negative or unintended consequences?	Has involvement in the JCR Program had unexpected/unintended positive or negative outcomes? What has led to the unintended positive or negative outcomes?	The extent to which the Program has documented any unexpected/unintended positive or negative outcomes. The perceptions and views of the JCR Program team regarding any unexpected/unintended positive or negative outcomes of the Program, and what led to these outcomes. The perceptions and views of facilitators regarding any unexpected/unintended positive or negative outcomes of the Program, and what led to these outcomes. The perceptions and views of participants regarding any unexpected/unintended positive or negative outcomes of the Program, and what led to these outcomes.	Analysis of documentation review Engagement with JCR Evaluation Reference Group. Stakeholder survey Stakeholder interviews Previous evaluation data

ATTACHMENT 2: JOINT CASE REVIEW PROGRAM LOGIC

AIM: The Joint Case Review Program aims to create a culture of inquiry, continuous learning and collaboration that will improve practice for better outcomes for clients and communities.

OBJECTIVE: This approach will create a more consistent case management practice with practitioners across CYFSP programs and assist with implementation of the Casework Reflective Tool, to guide the work of case managers across the service system. The model extends the learning from the actions and decisions of individuals to analysis and learning across organisations and the wider social system.

Inputs (what we invest)	Planned work		Outcomes		
	Activities (what we do)	Outputs (product of our work)	Short	Medium	Long
Families ACT JCR Program Coordinator, providing administrative and professional development support, mentoring and oversight. Funding provided by the ACT Government and Families ACT. Facilitators from CYFSP services. Professional development and peer support provided to facilitators. Evidence-base of the JCR theory underpinning the model and principles.	JCR sessions: Structured learning activities conducted jointly and involving practitioners from different services. Practitioners may attend up to four of seven sessions annually, which vary by geographic region and service type. JCRs are based on de-identified real cases or scenarios that provide supporting information, data and relevant documentation analysed by small teams through open-ended questions, assisted by a facilitator, put forward for possible insights and solutions. JCR facilitators assist small teams during sessions through knowledge of the case review process and its rationale, maintaining confidentiality, building trust, encouraging open and honest discussion and promoting critical thinking. Facilitators choose and circulate case studies.	A range of practitioners from different services meaningfully participate in JCR sessions. Scenarios are developed using de-identified real cases and analysed in JCR sessions. JCR participants are supported by facilitators to engage in JCR sessions in small teams.	For practitioners and services: Improved reflective practice focused on: collaboration between practitioners and services critical analysis and the opportunity to share creative solutions to complex problems development of new skills and knowledge ensuring practice reflects the principles and values of the Casework Reflective Tool Increased use of strengths-based language to review and reflect on practice. Improved confidence. Enhanced value and purpose of the professional work of practitioners across the child, youth and family sector, acknowledging the complexity of the work and skills	For practitioners and services: Increased trust and improved relationships between practitioners and services. Create more consistent case management practice across programs. Gaps, constraints and strengths in the operation of services are identified, such as: What should we know? What other processes should we be including? What are the gaps in processes? Are there any gaps in identified outcomes? New practices are identified, developed, implemented and monitored.	Improved learning at a practice, organisational and policy level. Improved professional leadership across the child, youth and family sector. Improved relationships between the community sector and government, leading to a more integrated and responsive service system. Improved outcomes for children, young people and families in the ACT.

Skills, knowledge and experience from practitioners participating from CYFSP services.	Training and support is provided to facilitators to plan, conduct and debrief after each JCR session. JCR Program Coordinator provides administrative and logistics support to organise JCR sessions and support for facilitators, including: Planning the annual JCR calendar Booking venues Promoting sessions Recording participant information Reporting to Families ACT Meeting with facilitators prior to and after sessions Coordinating set-up with facilitators Stakeholder engagement and communication with services and practitioners to provide information about the JCR program.	Facilitators participate in training and professional development to plan, conduct and debrief JCR sessions. Administrative and logistics support is provided to organise JCR sessions and support for facilitators. Services and practitioners are provided with information about the JCR program.	and knowledge required; and highlighting exemplary practice. Improved culture of sharing information and expertise. Increased self-awareness. Improved judgement of child and youth safety issues. Improved judgement of family safety issues. Clearer lines of communication are established and developed between stakeholders. For the JCR Program: Improved capacity of practitioners to conduct and be involved in JCRs.	Practitioners' practices reflect the principles and values of the Casework Reflective Tool. For the JCR Program: Skills and knowledge gained are transferable and can ultimately be used beyond CYFSP programs. Improved capacity of practitioners to conduct and be involved as active participants in communities of practice. Improved sustainability of the JCR program due to the Train the Trainer model.	

PRINCIPLES:

- Collaboration
- Participant-owned: responsive and flexible based on practitioner needs
- Systems approach
- Holistic with attention to the practitioner psychosocial process
- Deep learning
- Child and family focused
- Ecological and systemic
- Culturally competent
- Informed by theories e.g. trauma
- Practice based on professional judgement

- Relationship-based
- Strengths-based
- Reflective
- Gender aware
- Prevention and early intervention
- Outcomes focused and reflective

EXTERNAL FACTORS:

- Changes within the ACT Government and the community sector
- Ongoing provision of funding for implementing the JCR program