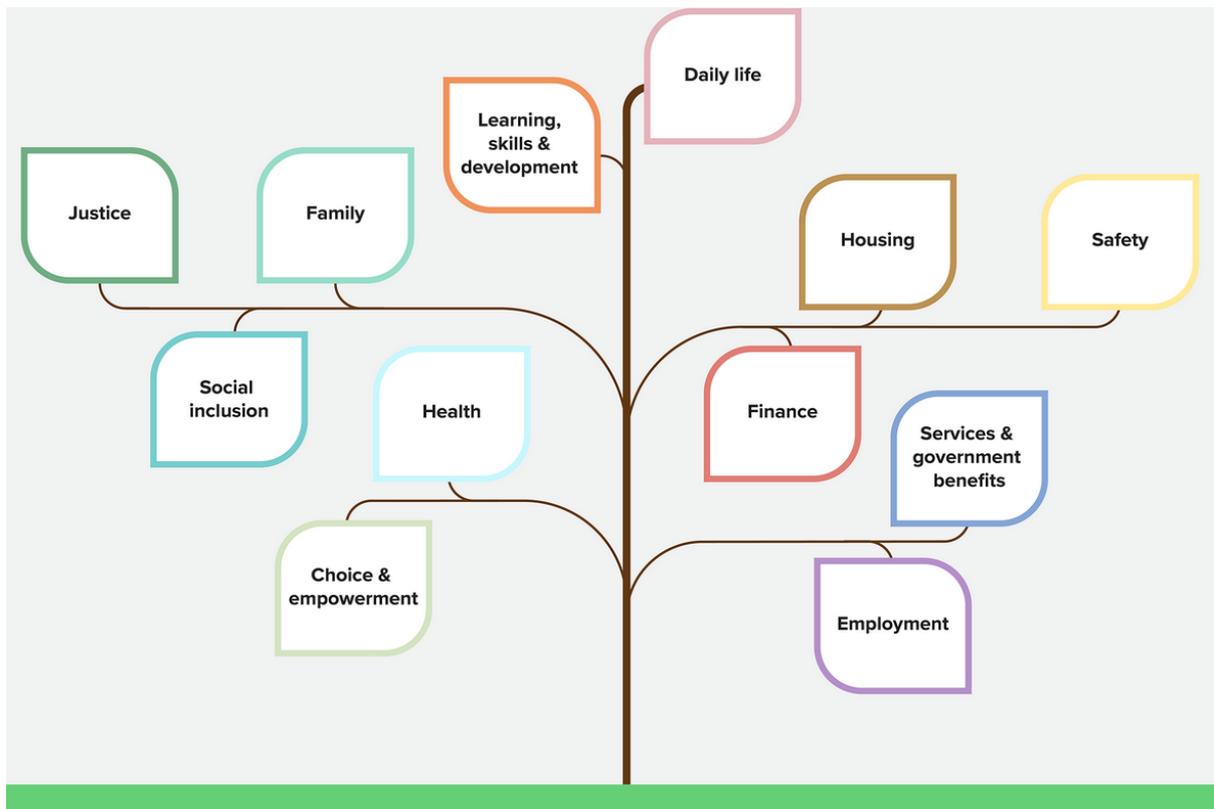




# Community Services Outcomes Tree

## A short introduction



## Citation

Wilson, E., Campain, R. & Brown, C. (2021). *The Community Services Outcomes Tree. An Introduction*, Centre for Social Impact, Swinburne University of Technology, Hawthorn.

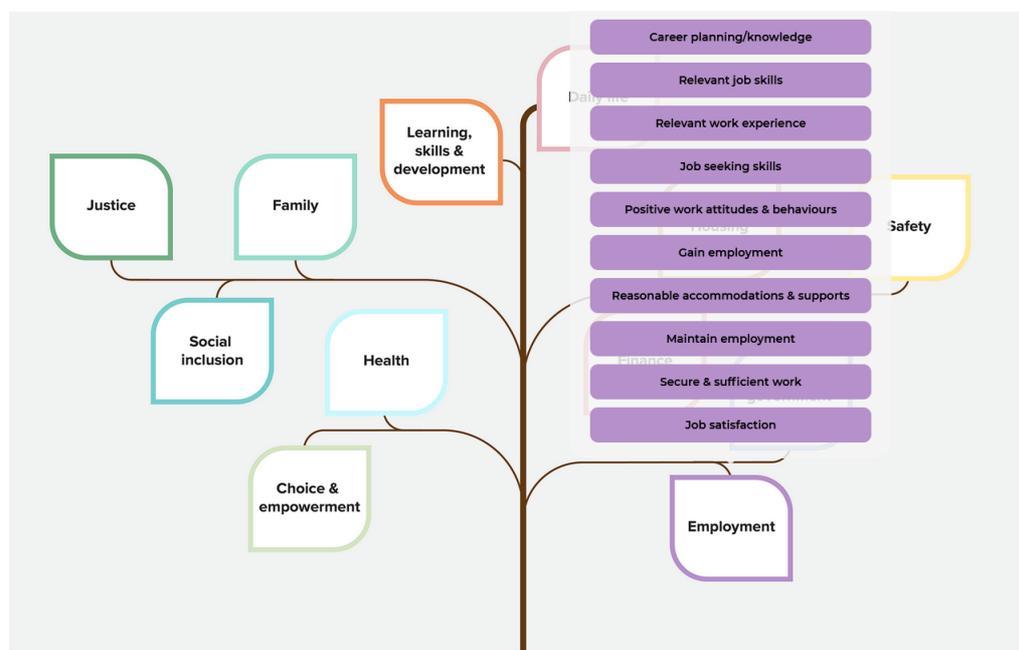
## Website

<https://communityservicesoutcomestree.com/>

The website will go live in late October, 2021. For access and a virtual tour please contact Professor Erin Wilson.

## Contact

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## About

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The Community Services Outcomes Tree is a framework for capturing the outcomes individuals experience as a result of community services. It is freely available for non-commercial use.

The Tree and its resources are available on an information website (to be launched October 2021). Resources are downloadable so as to be able integration into community service systems.

## Who Developed the Community Services Outcomes Tree?

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The Community Services Outcomes Tree has been developed by the Centre for Social Impact, Swinburne University of Technology, with the generous support of Uniting Vic Tas.

## Purpose of the Community Services Outcomes Tree

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The Community Services Outcomes Tree is designed to help community sector organisations measure the effect they are having on individuals' lives. Measuring these outcomes can help to guide service delivery, support advocacy and secure funding.

The framework encourages a 'whole of life' approach and recognises the way in which life domains interrelate. For example, while an organisation may focus on education it would be worthwhile to consider the impact of the service in other areas of a person's life such as employment, or social inclusion etc.

Research shows that the community sector is not well resourced to undertake evaluation, outcomes and impact measurement. We aim to support the sector by providing:

1. A comprehensive outcomes framework across all community service areas. This will assist services to **name** and then **measure** their outcomes.
2. A set of related data collection questions (2 for each outcome, or domain). This will help services to be able to ask meaningful questions of service users and collect data.
3. Resources to support data collection such as a survey or question template, which can be downloaded and customised to each service.

## Who is the Community Services Outcomes Tree For?

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The Community Services Outcomes Tree is designed for the community sector. This includes community service organisations, not-for-profit organisations and social enterprises. The framework can also be used by funders of community services such as governments and philanthropics.

## How Was the Community Services Outcomes Tree Developed?

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Many outcome frameworks exist across governments, not-for-profits and other community services. Often these frameworks focus on just one domain (e.g. education) rather than a ‘whole-of-life’ approach. Alternatively, these frameworks often focus on population-level outcomes (for example, how many people in a population have certain attributes, such as experiencing homelessness). Because of this, existing frameworks can have limited usefulness for the community services sector.

Our goal was to design an outcomes measurement framework that was relevant and useable by community sector organisations who want to measure outcomes for individuals. In designing the Community Services Outcomes Tree we:

- Conducted an extensive review of government, not-for-profit and academic literature related to outcomes measurement, both in Australia and internationally.
- Carried out consultations with Uniting Vic Tas staff, a major community service in Victoria and Tasmania, who provided valuable feedback and expertise on service provider realities.
- Carried out consultations with the Uniting Vic Tas Consumer Partnership Group who shared their insights based on their lived experience of services and expected outcomes
- Tested the framework against the outcome focus of various community services and government agencies with which we worked to ensure we had a broad coverage.

## How to use the Community Services Outcomes Tree

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There are three parts to the Community Services Outcomes Tree.

1. The outcomes framework – presented in the form of a ‘tree’ with twelve leaves. Each leaf is an outcome domain, for example ‘housing’. Each domain is comprised of a set of outcome areas. These represent the key outcome topics or themes found in the literature, in other outcomes frameworks and measurement instruments. This framework articulates, for the first time, the range of outcome areas that the community services sector aims to contribute to. See Diagram 1 below. The website enables users to click on each outcome area and read the short descriptor of concepts included (based on thematic analysis of international outcomes literature).
2. Question sets – we provide two outcomes measurement questions for each outcomes area (or at the domain level).
  - Question 1: seeks to measure the *amount of change* that has occurred for the service user in relation to the outcome area
  - Question 2: seeks to measure the *level of contribution the community service* has made to this change.
3. A survey or question template to guide the design of the full question set to ask service users.

The design of these resources is based on research that tells us that community services, in general, lack the capacity to develop and administer outcomes measurement approaches. Many are simply not funded to do so and, on top of this, the development of relevant and robust approaches is complex. Additionally, community services tell us that it is difficult to capture data about the

experiences of service users because contact with them may be fleeting or sporadic, service users dislike or do not have the time to provide information and feedback, and staff do not have the time to collect the information.

These issues have directly influenced the design of our approach. We have designed a simple or 'lean' approach that supports community services to:

1. select their outcomes
2. use the question sets provided
3. customize a question or survey template to meet their needs.

While we offer a stepped process, community services can use any or all parts of our work. Additionally, services can choose not to use our suggested data collection approach and instead use different methods, data collection instruments or approaches (quantitative or qualitative). Services can simply use the framework to align data from different sources or instruments on any identified outcome area. In this way, the framework can be an analytical or reporting tool that helps to align different data, as well as a method for data collection.

Finally, the outcomes in the framework can be reconfigured to match specific outcome frameworks, for example of the organization or funder. We have explicitly disaggregated outcomes into single topics. This means that the framework can act as a set of ingredients that can be put together in multiple ways to match the concepts within multiple frameworks. For example, the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing framework includes the outcome: 'Victorians have suitable and stable housing' which can be constructed through a combination of the outcomes: 'Suitable housing' and 'Stable housing' in the Community Services Outcomes Tree. This means that, data collected against outcomes can be used and reused to report against multiple outcomes frameworks.

## 1. Selecting outcomes

The first step is to select the outcomes of most relevance to the service/service users. This might be determined by a pre-existing program logic, funding requirement or organizational outcomes framework. If not, or if there is a need to further refine the outcomes, we suggest the following process.

1. Bring together a team to select the outcomes (typically a team of practitioners, team leaders, service managers and/or a team of service users).
2. Use the one page Diagram 1 (best printed on A3 sheet) as the base.
3. Start by getting each team member to brainstorm the outcomes experienced by service users (write each outcome on a sticky note).
4. Compare sticky notes and organize into clusters, name each cluster (or outcome area).
5. Compare the outcomes listed to Diagram 1 and circle the most relevant outcome/domain for each cluster.
6. Identify outcomes that are not covered on Diagram 1. Remember that this framework covers only outcomes (that is, effects on the person or their life) and does not cover the process or practice elements (that is, the way the service is delivered, e.g. respectful practice; knowledgeable staff).
7. If there are more than 3 outcome areas, we recommend prioritizing the top three. This is because we want to minimize the burden of data collection, particularly for service users who have to supply the data (by answering questions).

## 2. Use the question sets provided

The website provides two questions for each outcome or domain. All the question sets follow the same format. For example: Social connections and relationships (Domain: Social inclusion)

<p><b>Question 1:</b></p> <p>Think about your <b>social connections and relationships</b>.</p> <p>For example, having regular contact with people including family and friends, feeling connected to your community, having a broader social network, having positive relationships.</p> <p>How have these changed for you since coming to the service?</p> <table border="1"><tr><td>Got a lot worse</td></tr><tr><td>Got a bit worse</td></tr><tr><td>Not changed</td></tr><tr><td>Got a bit better</td></tr><tr><td>Got a lot better</td></tr><tr><td>Not relevant to me</td></tr></table>	Got a lot worse	Got a bit worse	Not changed	Got a bit better	Got a lot better	Not relevant to me	<p><b>Question 2:</b></p> <p>Do you think [the service] made a positive contribution to your <b>social connections and relationships</b>?</p> <table border="1"><tr><td>No, not at all</td></tr><tr><td>Yes, to some extent (a little)</td></tr><tr><td>Yes, to a large extent (a lot)</td></tr></table>	No, not at all	Yes, to some extent (a little)	Yes, to a large extent (a lot)
Got a lot worse										
Got a bit worse										
Not changed										
Got a bit better										
Got a lot better										
Not relevant to me										
No, not at all										
Yes, to some extent (a little)										
Yes, to a large extent (a lot)										

These questions have been designed to minimize burden and to generate outcomes data based on a single episode of data collection. While collecting data both pre and post service delivery, and measuring the level of change between these two time points, can yield useful data, it is not feasible for many services to do. It is also risky as it is only meaningful when both time points are covered for the same service user. Typically this means that only a small sample of service users supply data at both time points.

Services can choose to use different questions or data collection instruments to measure the selected outcomes.

## 3. Customise the question or survey template

A survey template is provided on the website (see Appendix 1). The template is meant to be provide a broad guide to the sorts of questions that services should include. Services can insert the outcome question sets, from step 2 above, into the survey/question template. Services should customize the language and format to their needs. It is recommended to include only those questions MOST relevant as service users prefer short and meaningful data collection approaches.

We strongly recommend that you include questions relating to the barriers to outcomes. This is an important set of information to assist in: identifying the structural and other impediments to outcomes attainment (regardless of the quality and quantity of service provision); advocating for change; and in identifying areas to target activities so as to remove or minimize barriers to outcomes.

The question sets and survey templates are provided as downloadable documents so as to maximise the service's ability to integrate these within their own Client Management Systems or data collection platforms (e.g. Microsoft forms, Survey Monkey, Qualtrics). Should there be demand (and funding), a central automated data collection platform can be built. Such a platform could enable automated survey development based on outcomes selected.

## Validation, testing and feedback

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The website invites users to provide feedback about the adequacy of outcomes captured by the Community Services Outcomes Tree, and the data collection approach. We will periodically update the Outcome Tree to reflect changes in the sector or areas that have been previously omitted.

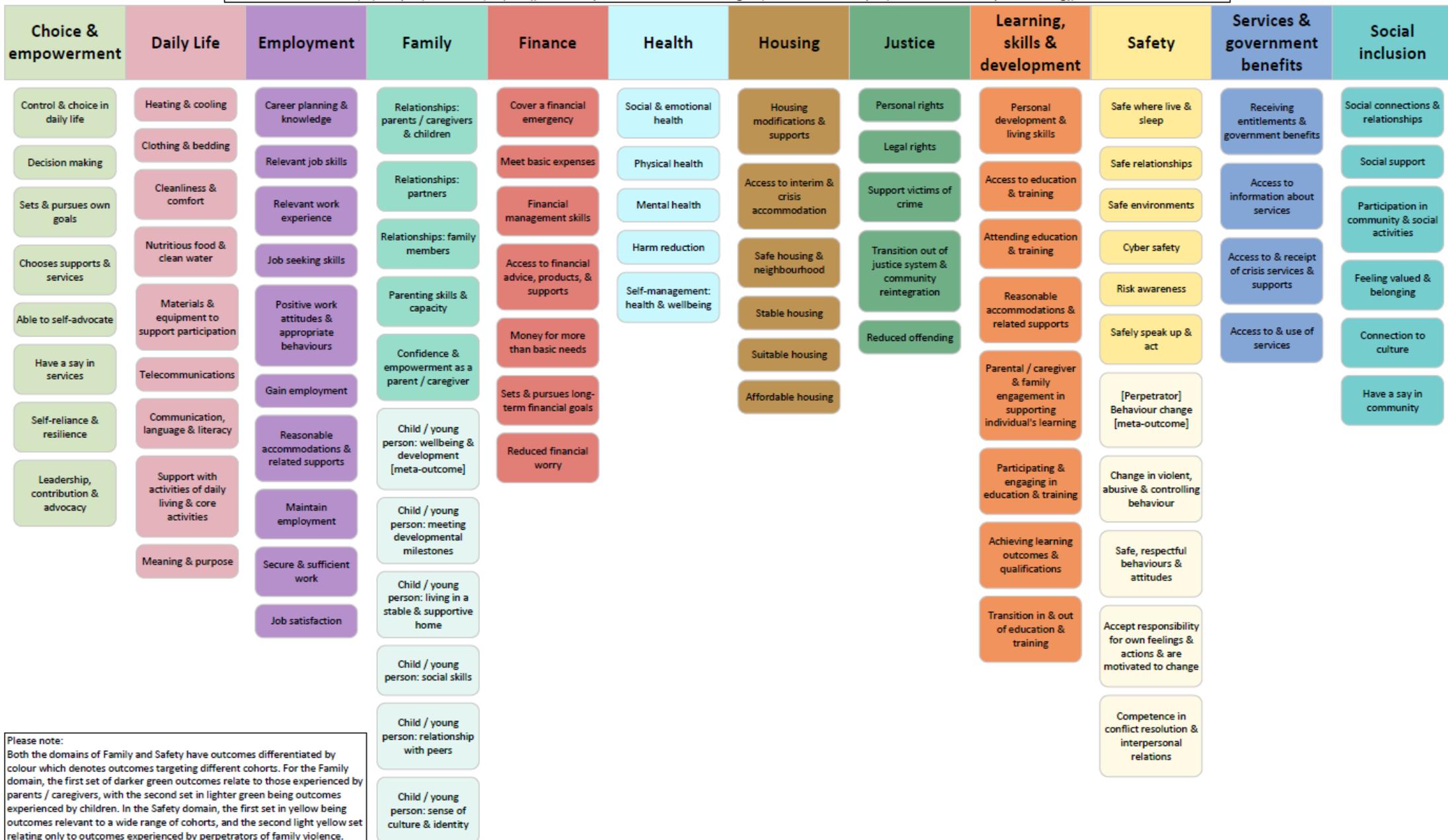
We will be working with Uniting Vic Tas. in the first instance, to roll out this approach across a wide range of community service types from late 2021. Additionally, the Community Services Outcomes Tree is being used in a range of research conducted by the Centre for Social Impact.

Organisations can register with us and we can provide a limited level of pro bono guidance and advice or enter into a formal arrangement for more substantial support. We aim to engage with all users as part of longer term evaluation.

Diagram 1

# Community Services Outcomes Tree v.04/06/21

Wilson, E., Campain, R. & Brown, C. (2021), Community Services Outcomes Tree diagram, Centre for Social Impact, Swinburne University of Technology, Hawthorn.



Please note:  
Both the domains of Family and Safety have outcomes differentiated by colour which denotes outcomes targeting different cohorts. For the Family domain, the first set of darker green outcomes relate to those experienced by parents / caregivers, with the second set in lighter green being outcomes experienced by children. In the Safety domain, the first set in yellow being outcomes relevant to a wide range of cohorts, and the second light yellow set relating only to outcomes experienced by perpetrators of family violence.

## Appendix 1: Survey template (with guidance)

There are many ways to collect data about the outcomes experienced by users of community services. There are many question sets that can be used to measure the outcomes listed in the Community Services Outcomes Tree.

Identifying, selecting, adapting or developing data collection methods is a resource-intensive activity and many community services do not have the capacity to invest resources in this.

To assist, we have developed a survey ‘template’ that can be used as a base and into which the selected outcomes questions from the Community Services Outcomes Tree can be inserted. This survey template is designed to collect data via self-report of consumers of community services. It is intended to be used at the end of, or at a set time after, the delivery of services.

The template provides a set of example questions. These can be adapted, deleted or used in full. We have provided an explanation of the rationale for each question on the left, (i.e. why you might choose to include it) and some examples of possible questions on the right of the document. Other questions can be used to replace the example questions provided. Services/organisations should customise their own data collection template to suit their context and needs.

While the template is in survey format, it can be adapted for any mode including phone or face to face interview, as well as an online survey instrument. This set of survey questions is designed for adults. Alternate data collection questions and methods should be used for children.

We note that users of community services that we have consulted have stated their preference for qualitative data collection that enables a conversation about outcomes and related topics.

Rationale and explanation for survey choices	Example survey questions and text
<b>Welcome:</b>	
Explanation of purpose: Insert explanation about the survey/data collection.	We are asking you to complete this survey as it will provide valuable information about the services [name of organisation or specific name of service] provides and what it achieves for people. This information will be valuable in assisting [name of organisation] to improve their services and outcomes for consumers. We think the survey will take about 10 minutes. Thank you for your time in completing this survey, we really appreciate your input.
Consent to collect data: Insert consent clause, if needed where the aim is to share data outside the organisation.	The information you provide will remain confidential and you cannot be identified. We will share all the information we collect from the surveys with our research partner [name of organisation] so that we can work together to collate and analyse the information and use the results to improve our services. If you are not happy for us to share your answers with our research partner, please do not complete this survey.
<b>Section 1: About the services you have used</b>	
Service type and dosage: Insert questions about service used, frequency, duration and intensity of service used. NOTE: some organisations have the ability to link data collection with	1.1 What [name of organisation] service have you most accessed in the last 12 months? _____
	1.2 How long have you been accessing/did you access this service? <input type="checkbox"/> Less than a month

<p>consumer records so that information about these aspects are already known. For example, within a single service type, all consumers might be automatically sent a survey 6 months after intake, or one month after formal service exit. Services may be able to auto-populate or link to this information without needing the consumer to complete this section.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 months  <input type="checkbox"/> 3-6 months  <input type="checkbox"/> 7-12 months  <input type="checkbox"/> More than 12 months</p> <p>1.3 How frequently do you access this service?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Hardly ever/occasionally  <input type="checkbox"/> One a month or less  <input type="checkbox"/> Once a fortnight  <input type="checkbox"/> Once a week  <input type="checkbox"/> Two or more times a week</p>
<p><b>Section 2: About what's changed in your life</b></p>	
<p>Measurement of outcome: Selected outcome 1</p> <p>Insert the suggested survey question for your selected outcome 1 or insert your own.</p> <p>Your own might include those from a related measurement tool, for example your organisation might use the Kessler 10 for Anxiety and Depression which you might use to measure the mental health domain, or might use HILDA to measure aspects of Finance domain.</p>	<p>2.1 Please think about [insert outcome]. For example, [insert definition of outcome].</p> <p>How has your [insert outcome] changed since coming to [name of service]?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Got a lot worse  <input type="checkbox"/> Got a bit worse  <input type="checkbox"/> Not changed*  <input type="checkbox"/> Got a bit better  <input type="checkbox"/> Got a lot better  <input type="checkbox"/> Not relevant to me</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ONLINE DROP DOWN BOX: If answer 'Not changed' =&gt; get drop down box:</li> </ul> <p><input type="checkbox"/> My situation did not change but it was maintained and is stable  <input type="checkbox"/> My situation required change that did not happen  <input type="checkbox"/> Too early to tell or to expect change</p>
<p>Qualitative explanation of change</p> <p>Consumers indicate they would rather tell the story of change not tick boxes. Services may choose to only ask the qualitative question (not 2.1) and then use the data to code the comments against the outcomes tree and a rating scale of change or other analysis/coding framework.</p>	<p>2. 2 Tell us about what changed for you in relation to your [insert selected outcome]</p>
<p>Measurement of service contribution to outcome: Selection outcome 1</p> <p>Insert the suggested survey question for your selected outcome 1 or insert your own.</p>	<p>2.3 Do you think [name of service] made a positive contribution to your [insert outcome]?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No, not at all  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, to some extent (a little)  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, to a large extent (a lot)</p>

<p>Qualitative explanation of service contribution</p> <p>Consumers indicate they would rather tell the story of change not tick boxes.</p>	<p>2.4. Please explain what was the service’s contribution to the change you achieved? (e.g. what did they do that helped you achieve this outcome?)</p>
<p>Measurement of outcome: Selected outcome 2</p> <p>Insert the suggested survey question for your selected outcome 2 or insert your own</p>	<p>2.5 Please think about [insert outcome]. For example, [insert definition of outcome].</p> <p>How has your [insert outcome] changed since coming to [name of service]?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Got a lot worse</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Got a bit worse</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Not changed</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Got a bit better</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Got a lot better</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Not relevant to me</li> </ul>
<p>Measurement of service contribution to outcome: Selection outcome 2</p> <p>Insert the suggested survey question for your selected outcome 2 or insert your own</p>	<p>2.6 Do you think [name of service] made a positive contribution to your [insert outcome]?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No, not at all</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, to some extent (a little)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, to a large extent (a lot)</li> </ul>
<p>Measurement of outcome: Selected outcome 3</p> <p>Insert the suggested survey question for your selected outcome 3 or insert your own</p> <p>(Repeat insert of as many outcomes as relevant. Consider the response burden for consumers regarding the length of survey. We recommend no more than 3 outcomes)</p>	<p>2.7 Please think about [insert outcome]. For example, [insert definition of outcome].</p> <p>How has your [insert outcome] changed since coming to [name of service]?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Got a lot worse</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Got a bit worse</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Not changed</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Got a bit better</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Got a lot better</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Not relevant to me</li> </ul>
<p>Measurement of service contribution to outcome: Selection outcome 3</p> <p>Insert the suggested survey question for your selected outcome 3 or insert your own.</p> <p>(Repeat insert of as many outcomes as relevant. Consider the response burden for consumers regarding the length</p>	<p>2.8 Do you think [name of service] made a positive contribution to your [insert outcome]?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No, not at all</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, to some extent (a little)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, to a large extent (a lot)</li> </ul>

<p>of survey. We recommend no more than 3 outcomes)</p>	
<p>Barriers to outcomes</p> <p>Insert a question to identify the barriers to outcomes attainment. This question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- helps identify barriers to address via service design and delivery or other change actions (e.g. advocacy)</li> <li>- recognises that not all outcomes are achievable without other systemic or other changes.</li> </ul>	<p>2.9 What was the biggest barrier to you achieving positive changes / outcomes?</p> <p>Please tick all that apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Housing issues (e.g. housing not affordable, not available, not suitable)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Money issues (e.g. low income, debts, lack of financial management skills)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Personal issues (e.g. mental health, drug and alcohol, personal trauma/crisis, difficulty in supporting children)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient family/community support (e.g. lack of support, social isolation, family violence)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Negative judgement or attitudes of others (e.g. made to feel guilty or ashamed by other people, was discriminated against)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Transport issues (e.g. isolated from people and services due to transport issues)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate services (e.g. waiting times to get service, not enough time provided to client, cost of services, ineligible for certain services)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Poor service quality (e.g. services not helpful, unskilled staff, received poor treatment from services)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Don't trust services / government (e.g. fear involvement of child protection, don't feel safe with services/staff)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Don't know what support is available (e.g. government services, community services)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please tell us) _____</li> </ul>
<p>Service contribution to other unanticipated and broad outcomes</p> <p>Insert question to test if outcomes have been achieved beyond those areas you have selected</p>	<p>2.10 Tick any other areas of your life where the [name of service/organisation] has helped bring about positive change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Daily life (e.g. access to basics like food, bedding, clothing, sanitation/shower, personal care, telecommunications etc).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Choice and empowerment</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Learning, skills and development</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Employment</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Family</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Finance</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Health</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Housing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Justice</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Safety</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Service access and government benefits</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</li> </ul>
<p>Improvement related to presenting issues</p> <p>This question is part of the data collected by DEX (Australian Department of Social Services) for services funded via this Dept.</p>	<p>2.11 Are you now better able to deal with the issues you sought help with?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mostly</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Always</li> </ul>

<b>3. About the services you received and the way they were delivered</b>	
<p>Process measures</p> <p>Services have a range of process, quality, practice standards and measures (e.g. respect for consumer, treating consumer with respect; treating consumer as expert of their situation; working in partnership etc). Insert questions to measure performance around the <i>way</i> services were delivered, and the <i>way</i> staff worked with consumers</p>	<p>[This section has been left intentionally blank as this has to be customised to service type, sector, practice standards and approaches]</p>
<b>4. Service improvement</b>	
<p>Service improvement</p> <p>Insert questions to identify areas for and suggestions about service improvement</p>	<p>4.1 What would improve the service? What could [name of organisation/service] do differently / better?</p> <p>_____</p>
<b>5. Targeted strategic question/s</b>	
<p>Ad hoc strategic data collection</p> <p>Insert any questions related to targeted issues e.g. special advocacy issues that are current, information about additional unmet needs etc.</p>	
<b>6. About you</b>	
<p>Demographics</p> <p>Select and insert demographic questions relevant to your cohort. Services may also select questions from population surveys (e.g. ABS) where they wish to make direct comparison to demographic characteristics of a wider population. Maintaining the same question format enables direct comparison.</p>	<p>6.1 What gender do you identify as?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Female</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Male</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other</p>
	<p>6.2 What is your age?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 18-24 years</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 25-44 years</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 45-64 years</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 65-74 years</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 75 years and over</p>
	<p>6.3 What is the post code where you live most of the time?</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Targeted demographic questions relevant to your service</p>	<p>6.4 e.g. Aboriginal; CALD; income level; income type; how long waiting for service?</p>
<b>7. Feedback on survey process</b>	
<p>Feedback to inform survey design in future</p>	<p>7.1 Tell us how you found doing the survey. Tick all the boxes that apply to you.</p>

	<input type="checkbox"/> Too long <input type="checkbox"/> Didn't make sense <input type="checkbox"/> Didn't like thinking about my situation <input type="checkbox"/> Liked being asked if the service had made a difference in my life <input type="checkbox"/> Quick to do <input type="checkbox"/> Made sense <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
<b>8. Any other comments</b>	
Opportunity for consumer to have a say about other things	Is there anything else you would like to tell us? _____
<b>9. Thank you</b>	
Thank you Insert thank you message Insert link to any remuneration process or 'prize' draw	Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey. Your answers are VERY important to us. The information will be used by [name of organisation] to help improve services in the best interests of the people and communities [name of organisation] serves.
Instructions on how to submit or return if by mail/email.	Please press the submit button.  Please return by mailing to: