

Behaviour Support Plans

The *Framework to reduce criminalisation of young people in residential care* (the framework) draws on a number of recent Victorian reviews and reports on the experiences of children and young people in the out of home care and youth justice systems. A key finding from these reviews is that children and young people in residential care are more likely than other children and young people to have contact with police and the criminal justice system. The framework outlines 8 Guiding Principles as well as a decision-making guide for when to call police. The first stage to respond to behaviours of concern is proactive prevention. As part of proactive prevention each young person in care must have a positive behaviour support plan. To read the framework in full go to: <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/framework-reduce-criminalisation-young-people-residential-care>

Guide to the framework

The framework outlines expectations of how police, residential care providers, the Department of Health and Human Services and other agencies should work together to limit the exposure of children and young people in residential care to the youth justice system.

Proactive prevention

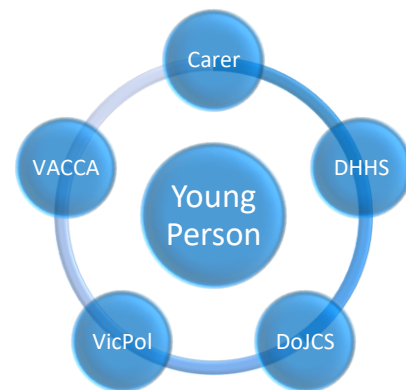
Supporting and managing the behaviour of young people can be complex. Behaviour may be developmentally appropriate such as frustration tantrums of young children, or may be as a result of, or impacted by, factors such as previously experienced trauma, disability, mental health, alcohol and other drugs and a young person's environment.

All young people in residential care must have a behaviour support plan.

Behaviour support plans should align with:

- an individual's *Looking after children care and placement plan*
- be consistent with a positive behaviour support framework
- align with the young person's cultural plan
- for Aboriginal young people it must consider Aboriginal decision-making principles; and
- Aboriginal people should be involved in developing Aboriginal young people's behaviour support plans.

A behaviour support plan template <<https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/behaviour-support-plan-template-out-home-care-services>> can be found on the Department of Health and Human Services website.



The benefits of this approach include:

- improving the young person's quality of life, strengths and safety skills
- promoting positive connections and building trust with residential care workers to improve the young person's experience and to minimise the possibility of re-traumatisation
- preventing further challenging behaviours by helping young people to develop skills to communicate, engage in activities and understand their feelings
- providing an environment that best supports a young person's needs and development
- breaking down barriers to talking about difficult topics and advocating for the young person's needs.

A positive behaviour support plan may include a range of strategies or actions such as:

Changes to the environment / environmental supports	Teaching skills for young people	Short-term strategies that promote rapid change
<p>Making changes to the environment based on information about the young person to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased opportunities for access to a variety of activities • a focus on tasks and opportunities that build on strengths • increased positive interactions with the young person • sensitive and responsive caring • a 'balanced lifestyle' • a predictable environment • consistent routines • improved interactions and realistic expectations. 	<p>Problem solving and decision-making skills – helping a young person put a problem into words, brainstorming solutions and making plans.</p> <p>General skills development – teaching a person to do more things for themselves.</p> <p>Effective communication – teaching a young person how to seek help or attention from others if needed.</p> <p>Managing unhelpful thoughts – to address the way a young person thinks about themselves, others or the world around them.</p> <p>Coping skills – teaching the young person what to do when feeling angry, how to put words to feelings and emotions, and calming skills such as controlled breathing.</p>	<p>Building the skills of workers to use strategies that readily support learning new skills or positive behaviour responses such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reinforcing specific 'positive' behaviours – this includes an understanding of reinforcement, identifying resources and how to use reinforcement to promote behaviour change • avoiding things that upset the young person (triggers) and increasing things that promote positive responses • responding to behaviour early and quickly • consistency in residential care worker responses • strategies to increase engagement with young people.

Care teams should actively work with young people to develop a person-centred behaviour support plan.

Repair and Reflection

After an incident of challenging behaviour, particularly where the young person's behaviour escalated and a police response was required, it is important to make efforts to repair the relationship between the residential care workers, local police and the young person.

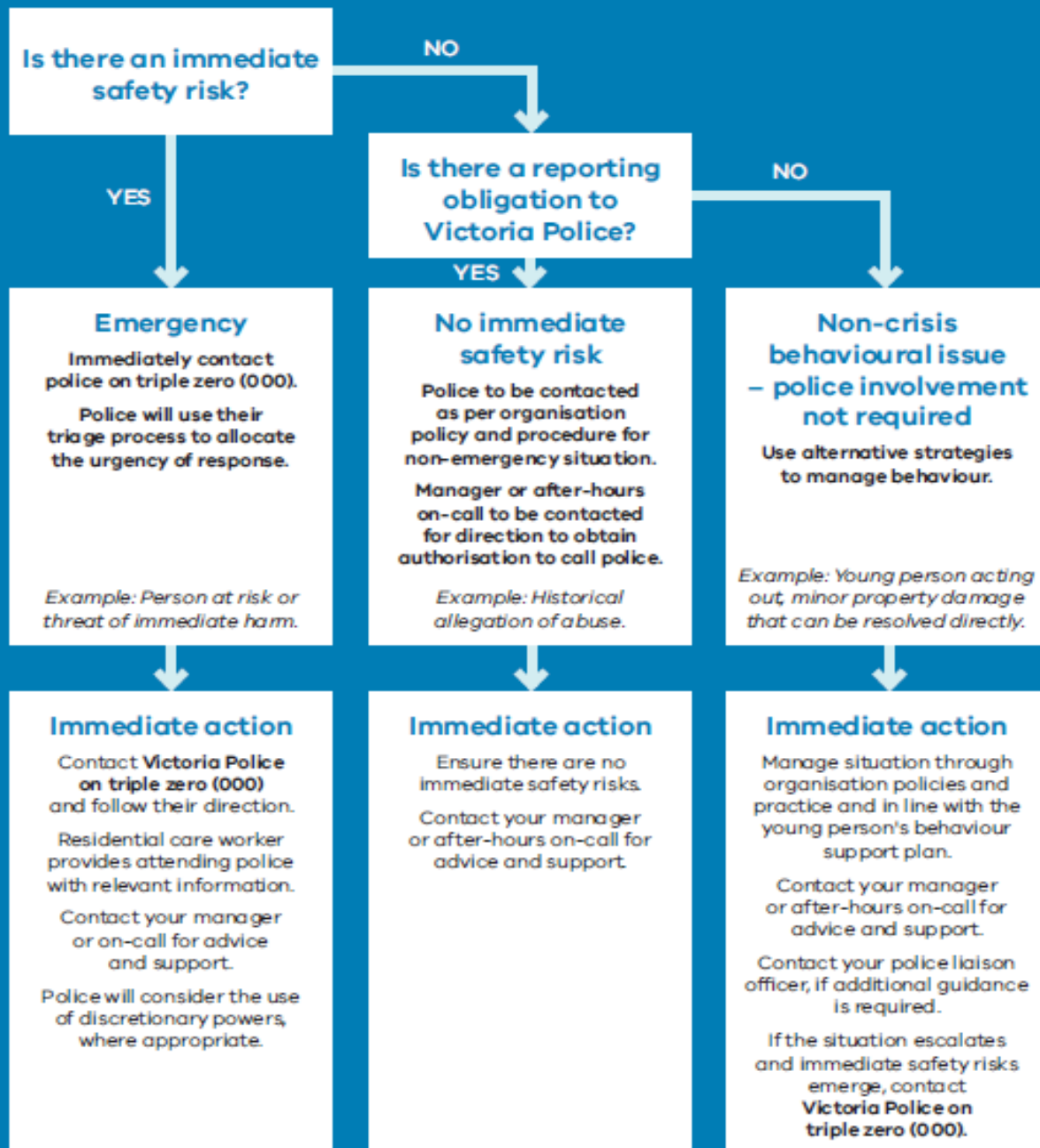
As part of repair and reflection, and at the appropriate time, both the young person and residential care worker need the opportunity to discuss what has occurred and the impact of the action undertaken. The purpose of this is to help all involved understand the causes and consequences of the event/ response, to support the young person to consider the cause, impact and consequence of the behaviour and how to avoid similar situations arising in the future.

It is also important to repair relationships between the young person, residential care workers and other residents involved in the event/ response. This is an important process because it mirrors healthy and functional relationships. This process has a restorative function rather than one where blame and shame are facilitated.

Where police have attended a residential care home in response to a call for assistance, residential care workers must complete incident reports in line with local reporting requirements and organisational processes.

The young person's behaviour support plan and other relevant plans for the young person or the residential care home must be reviewed and updated to include reflections following the event/ response.

When do I contact police? Flowchart for residential care workers



Post-event action:

- Complete reporting requirements (as appropriate) in line with organisation processes.
- Review the young person's behaviour support plan and other relevant plans for the residential care home.
- All events should provide an opportunity to work with young people on restorative practices and alternative response strategies.
- All calls to police must be reviewed and a de-brief conducted with relevant parties (Victoria Police as appropriate) to identify opportunities to strengthen future responses.
- Where there is an impact on the child or young person, complete Critical Incident Management System (CIMS) processes.