



Therapeutic Care Framework

April 2026

Foreword

At Access4u, we are committed to creating a world where individuals with disability thrive, finding their unique strengths and abilities amidst the beautiful spectrum of human diversity. It is with immense pride and a sense of responsibility that I introduce our Therapeutic Care Framework – a cornerstone in our unwavering dedication to providing the highest level of care and support for those who rely on us.

Our Therapeutic Care Framework is a testament to our commitment to nurturing, person-centred, and safe care practices. We recognise every individual, whether a child, young person, or adult, deserves the opportunity to live a fulfilling life and make choices that empower them. This framework places them firmly at the heart of our efforts, giving them a voice and an active role in decisions that affect their lives.

In the journey of creating this framework, we have been resolute in our dedication to incorporating the invaluable input of our dedicated employees who work tirelessly to provide the best care possible. Their expertise, compassion, and unwavering commitment are the backbone of our organisation.

We understand the environment in which care is provided plays a pivotal role in shaping experiences. Our Therapeutic Care Framework considers the physical and emotional surroundings in which individuals live and grow. We aim to create spaces that are not just safe but also nurturing and inclusive, fostering an atmosphere of acceptance and support.

Central to our commitment is a therapeutic approach to care that is trauma-informed and neurodiverse affirming. We recognise trauma can have a profound impact on individuals' lives, and it is our responsibility to create an environment that promotes healing and growth. We celebrate neurodiversity as a source of strength and resilience, ensuring our practices honour the unique strengths and perspectives that each individual brings to our community.

In closing, Access4u's Therapeutic Care Framework embodies our dedication to excellence and our promise to provide the best possible care for all children, young people, and adults we support. It is a testament to our values of empowerment, inclusion, and respect.

Thank you for joining us on this journey of care, compassion, and growth. Together, we will continue to make a positive impact in the lives of those we support, fostering a world where every individual can reach their full potential.

With heartfelt gratitude and determination,



Cathy Miller
Chief Executive Officer

April 2026

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Access4u's Therapeutic Care Framework ensures a nurturing, person centred, safe approach to care, with consideration for the support provided by employees and the environment.

It puts our customers at the centre, empowering them in active participation in the decisions that affect them.

Access4u is committed to ensuring a therapeutic approach to care, underpinned by a trauma informed and neuro-diverse affirming practices, to ensure best outcomes for the people we support.



Quality Assurance

Access4u's Therapeutic Care Framework is supported by our Quality Governance Framework. This includes our quality principles that are used to measure the quality and improvement of our services, supports and practices.

Embedding our Quality Governance Framework ensures we:

- prioritise quality and safeguards for our customers, community, and staff
- promote an environment of continuous improvement
- are evidence based and have inclusive decision-making processes
- monitor outcomes against performance indicators and targets
- use internal and external review mechanisms to identify improvement opportunities
- develop a culture of ownership, participation, and responsiveness where our staff understand their responsibilities for quality processes and outcomes

Evaluation

The Therapeutic Care Framework will be an organic document during its initial 12 months of implementation. This will allow a continuous improvement approach throughout its implementation, supporting the framework to be fully understood and embedded across the organisation. We will continuously review and evaluate the Therapeutic Care Framework to measure:

- staff training and development, supporting staff in their understanding of trauma and individualised support; ensuring all staff have completed online Trauma Informed Practice training and have undertaken a workshop regarding this framework. This is supported and followed by individual and group supervision.
- onboarding processes are accessible and inclusive to all
- evidence that physical spaces are designed with a trauma, neuro-diverse affirming and therapeutic informed lens
- that emotional safety is considered in all interactions and support for our customers
- staff commitment to developing positive, trusting relationships with our customers
- there is a whole organisation approach to therapeutic informed care
- care and practices are consistent and supportive
- team-approaches to care are established and evident through regular team meetings, personal development, individual supervision and group supervision
- monitoring of transparent and holistic communication with external stakeholders
- processes are in place to provide our customers and community with means of raising concerns and complaints

Introduction

Access4u understands and acknowledges the positive outcomes associated with therapeutic care, underpinned by neuro-diverse affirming and trauma informed care and practice, and are committed to ensuring that care provided to customers does no harm, is in line with best practice and promotes positive outcomes.

Access4u recognises the important role it plays in the lives of our customers living in out of home care arrangements, with research suggesting that children and young people who experience trauma may become more resilient “if they experience positive and considerate care providers” (Esaki et al. In. Avery et al., 2018).

McLean (2019) completed a review of current therapeutic care frameworks, reviewing surveys which represented the views of 26 agencies across all Australian jurisdictions. Whilst the study did not specify the therapeutic care model being used and explored general approaches to therapeutic care, it outlined that overall current models require development in referral matching, child-centred support and secure care models to be successful in supporting children and young people (McLean, 2019).

Access4u has considered this in the development of its Therapeutic Care model. Evidence overall suggested that trauma informed care models have significantly more positive outcomes for people living in out of home care (Avery et al., 2018).

With acknowledgement of the benefit in a therapeutic care framework being implemented organisationally, Access4u takes into consideration the various models and frameworks of therapeutic care which are in place nationally and internationally. Access4u recognises the vital role that a therapeutic care model can play for our customers to achieve best outcomes.

As well as currently implemented frameworks and models, Access4u acknowledges and values best practice research and co-design in services. We value communication with our customers and where possible their families. Cameron et al. (2019) highlights that people value:

- positive and lasting relationships that are genuinely caring
- predictability
- physically safe environments
- being listened to
- flexible carers who respect culture
- connection to family and friends
- stability
- emotionally safe environments
- being involved in decision making
- being respected
- opportunities for positive future outcomes, working towards positive goal outcomes

With consideration of the Access4u service delivery models, best practice research and current therapeutic care models and frameworks, the Access4u Therapeutic Care Framework has been developed.

Therapeutic care policy statement

Access4u's Therapeutic Care Framework outlines the processes to ensure the delivery of high-quality support to our customers.

The framework establishes a structured approach to ensure service provision is designed and delivered with a trauma informed and neuro-diverse affirming approach.

Access4u's Therapeutic Care Framework ensures a nurturing, safe approach to care, with consideration for the support provided by employees, and the environment. It puts our customers at the centre, empowering them in active participation in the decisions that affect them.

Access4u acknowledges its responsibility for a whole-organisation approach, ensuring that all policies, processes and practices are consistent with the vision and principles of the framework and recognise that implementation requires whole business accountability.

Implementation of our Therapeutic Care Framework provides assurance that:

- care provided to customers is of a high quality, underpinned by trauma informed approaches
- care provided to customers is done so in environments conducive to supporting goals and objectives of customers
- care provided to customers is considered, individualised and based on thorough assessment and planning, goal setting and regularly review
- employees are supported and knowledgeable in their role, ensuring the highest quality of support to our customers
- the development and delivering of our services and supports encourages and considers the wants and needs of our customers
- people accessing Access4u supports feel cared for
- we monitor and measure outcomes for our customers, being flexible to change



Therapeutic care principles

Access4u's Therapeutic Care Framework is developed to ensure our customer's needs and preferences are at the centre of everything we do, and underpinned by the following 6 principles:

1. **Trauma-informed approach**
 - A trauma informed approach to service development and delivery to ensure environments and practice is conducive to healing, with the commitment to do no harm
2. **Connection and belonging**
 - An approach to ensure connectedness and belonging for our customers ensuring that they feel nurtured and cared for
3. **Person-centred and individualised**
 - Empowering our customers to be active participants in decisions regarding their lives and ensuring support provided is done in a customer's needs and strengths-led way, evidence based, with consideration for the physical environment as well as the provision of support.
4. **High quality staff knowledge and support**
 - Ensuring staff have access to a high quality of training and support to ensure their safety, supporting them to deliver a high standard of care
5. **Neuro-diverse affirming**
 - A neurodiversity-affirming approach acknowledges that all neurotypes have unique strengths, interests, and support needs and practices used affirm neurodivergent identity
6. **Culturally inclusive**
 - Acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Lands and respects and supports the individual cultural needs, spirituality and connection to Culture and, where possible, Family and Community.



Trauma informed practice

Trauma can stem from exposure to an event or series of events that cause emotional disturbance, which may be life-threatening (Centre for Health Care Strategies, 2021). Each person will respond to an event differently and something that can be traumatic for one person but may have little effect on another. Indeed, trauma is defined as “an experience in which a person’s internal resources are not adequate to cope with external stressors” (The Sanctuary Institute, 2022). Trauma can have “lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, and/or spiritual well-being” (Centre for Health Care Strategies, 2021).

A person who has experienced trauma will present with altered brain chemistry which often results in the perception of threat where this does not exist, applying survival skills such as freezing, fleeing or displaying aggression in situations they perceive as stressful (The Sanctuary Institute, 2022).

Often customers in Out of Home Care have experienced trauma at a very young age, and this trauma can be seen in the day-to-day life of people who have experienced trauma therefore we endeavour to provide care through a trauma informed lens.

Experiences that may be traumatic include:

- Physical, sexual, domestic violence and emotional abuse
- Childhood harm, abuse or neglect
- Living with a family member with mental health or substance use disorders
- Sudden, unexplained separation from a loved one
- Poverty and financial abuse
- Racism, discrimination, and oppression
- Violence in the community, war, or terrorism

We will achieve this through:

- acknowledging the effects of harm, abuse and neglect, loss, grief and trauma, suicide ideation and self-harming behaviour
- providing care and support to our customers with a trauma informed approach
- staff having a high level of understanding of trauma and trauma informed approaches
- staff recognise the influence that trauma has on behaviour and connection
- customers are supported in a way that is conducive to healing
- environments, activities and supports are established with consideration of trauma
- customers feel safe and supported
- ensuring thorough onboarding processes to determine possible adverse experiences, with an understanding that separation from family may be traumatic in itself
- supporting customers to access to appropriate physical, behavioural, emotional and other therapeutic intervention strategies (including working with relevant professionals and support agencies).

Belonging and connection

Access4u acknowledges and promotes the importance of connectedness and belonging for our customers to support their overall wellbeing.

Access4u encourages support which is nurturing and consistent and recognises the role of the organisation and staff in ensuring our customers feel cared for and connected to people and the culture important to them.

Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People (2019) recognises the importance in connectedness for children and young people and outlines concerns in poor allocation and matching for children and young people in care with the acknowledgment that this often leads to negative relationships and poorer outcomes overall. Appropriate matching and allocation occurs when organisations consider matching staff and other individuals at the placement to the needs of the child or young person (Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People, 2019).

We will achieve this through:

- staff being appropriately matched to a customer's needs and profile before introduction and ongoing scheduling to the customer's program
- customer's being appropriately matched to placement within Access4u's services
- customers are appropriately matched to placements with other customers (where appropriate)
- service delivery with a relationship-based approach, ensuring customers are nurtured and feel cared for
- non-confrontational approaches to care
- customers feel a sense of belonging
- customers experience connection to country and culture
- developing individualised customer profiles to be used in recruitment and rostering
- thorough assessment and consultation prior to onboarding customers to ensure that Access4u is the most appropriate service provider in meeting their needs
- thorough consideration of the needs and profiles of each customer, prior to them residing within the same home
- ensuring family are involved, where possible and safe to do so, to ensure connection to family
- ensuring transparent communication with all stakeholders to ensure connection to services
- working with First Nations people, advisory groups, elders and service providers to guide culturally responsive services
- ensuring that appropriate assessment and care plans are developed at onboarding.

Person-centred and individualised practice

Access4u value adds the involvement of the disability community in co-design of services for individuals with disability.

We acknowledge the importance of active participation of customers in their services and in decision making about their care. We aim to empower our customers in self-advocacy.

Access4u acknowledges the importance in ensuring all support provided is evidence-based, and individualised to the strengths, goals and needs of the individual. We recognise the value this has in creating nurturing, safe and supportive environments to ensure the overall wellbeing of customers.

Emond et al. (2016) explain that “daily life has the power to soothe, to hold and to repair. When this is allowed to happen within the context of ‘home’, the richness of these experiences is increased.”

We will achieve this through:

- collaboration and being person centred
- empowering our customers to communicate their wants and needs
- ensuring that the communication style of the individual is considered, with alternative methods of communication available to ensure their participation
- supporting our customers in developing self-advocacy skills
- implementing predictable routines, in discussion with the customer and their networks
- maintaining properties which are fit-for-purpose, clean, homely and comfortable, and consider the individualised needs of the customers; this includes sensory considerations
- regularly communicating with our customers to discuss their experiences in the out of home care setting, reviewing processes and making changes to meet their needs and wants
- implementing comprehensive assessment and creating thorough care plans at onboarding to establish need and wants
- ongoing re-assessment of need, with flexibility to change support as needed
- involving our customers in ongoing assessment of need
- establishing safe and supportive environments, conducive to healing and based on the individualised needs and wants of the customer
- providing predictable, consistent and stable support
- developing home-like environments

High quality staff knowledge and support

Access4u is a charitable organisation established in 2018. Access4u value our staff in the role they play in caring for our customers. Since then, Access4u has been at the forefront of service development and advocacy with a strong legacy of being responsible for bringing many firsts to the community in South Australia. We are committed to delivering service excellence to our customers, families and community, and are proud of our compassionate, safe and inclusive services that focus on the needs of our community.

Access4u recognises, respects and values the diversity of our customers, community and employees. We understand that valuing diversity contributes to improved outcomes for our customers and a conducive working environment for our employees. We are committed to providing an environment, care and supports that are sensitive and relevant, and free from stigma, discrimination and stereotyping. We understand that a large cohort of our customers and community require complex support needs and may be unable to effectively represent or defend their own rights and interests. Our staff aims to safeguard our customers to ensure well-being, avoid harm, and strengthen their voice to ensure their rights are respected, dignity maintained, and what is important to them understood.

It is important to recognise that support workers become significant influences on the development of customers they care for (Emond et al., 2016). Outcomes for children in out of home care settings are improved where providers are present physically, emotionally, and psychologically (Avery et al. 2018). Emond et al. (2016) outlines that for support staff to provide appropriate support, they must receive appropriate support from their organisation, with an understanding that providing healing care impacts the support staff too.

We acknowledge the complexities they face and that a high-quality level of training and support is required to ensure our staff are confident and supported in their role. This ensures the best care is provided to our customers.

We will achieve this through:

- establishing staff teams that are confident in their knowledge and competence
- staff understand and knowledgeable in the use and misuse of restrictive practices
- developing staff teams that feel supported in their role
- staff have a comprehensive understanding trauma, child development and behaviour
- consistent, stable staff teams with reduced turn-over
- providing staff with regular, quality, formal supervision to ensure that they can access appropriate support and guidance
- encouraging staff to access additional formal supports in managing the complexities that they experience, including the organisation's EAP
- providing staff with easily accessible urgent support and debriefing opportunities
- working with external stakeholders to ensure their engagement in team meetings and the provision of appropriate training
- providing staff with comprehensive training, individualised to the customer
- consistent rostering of staff
- ensuring relevant, appropriate, thorough onboarding of staff prior to engagement with customers, ensuring all appropriate information and training specific to the customer is provided

Neuro-diverse affirming practice

Access4u acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and practices in a neuro-diverse affirmative manner. This means we embrace the strengths of each individual and build on those strengths and utilise tools that develop improvement in participation with their environment.

Access4u acknowledges the importance in ensuring all support provided is individualised to the strengths, goals and desires of the individual. We recognise the value this has in creating nurturing, safe and supportive environments to ensure the overall wellbeing of our customers.

We will achieve this through:

- seeking to understand the needs of neurodivergent individuals from their perspective and adapting the environment to meet these needs.
- understanding and respecting neurodivergent communication styles, listening skills and individual sensory needs
- support self-advocacy and problem-solving skills
- developing skills in customers to understand their emotions, behaviours and communication of other people around them, which in turn supports them how to respond
- supporting and validating our customer's feelings and helping them learn calming methods and mechanisms
- acknowledging that some individuals need time and space to process
- encouraging safe self-regulation skills, including stimming.
- utilising neurodiversity affirming language and tools
- providing individualised support, based on the needs, strengths, characteristics and goals of each individual
- establishing safe and supportive environments, conducive to healing and based on the individualised needs and wants of the individual
- providing predictable, consistent and stable support
- developing a home environment that the customer desires
- providing care and support which ensures the physical and emotional safety of our customers
- Implementing comprehensive assessment and creating thorough care plans at onboarding to establish need and wants

Culturally inclusive practice

Access4u respects and acknowledges the traditional ownership and connection to the lands we gather, work and play on.

Access4u also acknowledges there are many cultures that live in Australia and ensures our customers are supported to have an understanding and connection to their culture and community.

We believe all individuals, where safe and possible, are able to connect and be supported to enjoy their cultural background and that of their birth families

We will achieve this through:

- upskilling staff in culturally appropriate practice ensuring culturally responsive care
- working with Elders, spokespersons, advisory groups and service providers for First Nations People and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities to develop and implement culturally sensitive and responsive care
- where possible, staff are aware of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the customers in their care
- staff are encouraged to learn more about the cultures represented in our organisation as well as other cultures
- bilingual staff are encouraged to use their language and knowledge with our customers. Staff try and learn a few phrases in the languages of the customers they care for or other languages.
- families are given the opportunity to participate in the decisions which affect our customers, where possible
- staff gather information about the customer's needs, routine, key family events and the family's cultural practices
- customers are encouraged to develop an awareness of their own identity and to increase their interest in the heritage of others
- evaluation and analysis of attendance patterns to see if customers from a particular culture use or do not use the service, the reasons for this and how to develop marketing strategies for future promotion
- our offices and building have posters, notices, designs, pamphlets, patterns and crafts displayed or demonstrated, representing a variety of cultures and diverse communities
- staff aware of diverse dietary restrictions and practices and needs and reflect the multicultural nature of Australia
- staff are knowledgeable and encourage celebrating festivals and celebrations embracing the diversity of the customers in our organisation

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