

### Why is this important?

Keeping a balanced approach between agile, innovative and adaptive responses while managing risks effectively increases the chances of transitioning through disruptive periods, while ensuring effective care and support for children and young people.

### Key Insights in Action



**A balanced approach between agile and adaptive responses and readiness for the future can help services transition through increasing disruption and uncertainty.** The ability to make decisions and execute plans in an agile way (considering associated risks) is crucial, while maintaining care and support for children and families as well as the social care workforce.



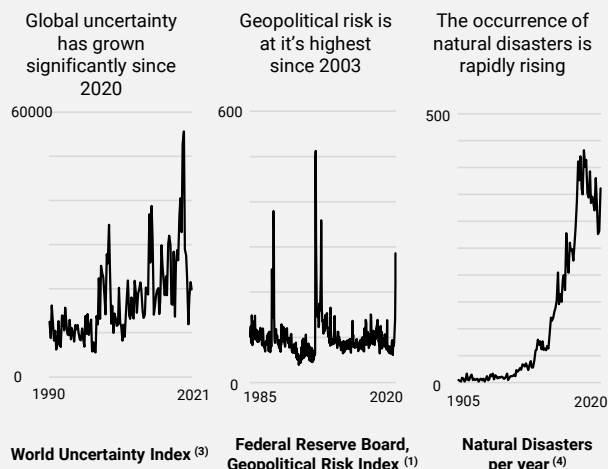
**Reflections on the pandemic reveal an agile response was enabled through effective leadership and an adaptive workforce, open systems of communication, and support for all members of the social care workforce** through the implementation of appropriate and innovative training and well-being solutions.



**Fostering a culture of flexibility, experimentation and entrepreneurship is vital** to adapt and continue delivering services and responses to recovery and care in an unpredictable future. Cross-collaboration across the sector can enhance collective learning and provide solutions.

### Research tells us...

#### Disruption is becoming more frequent...



Public services and organisations need to enhance conditions for agile ways of working and innovation whilst managing COVID-19 risks effectively.

Research from Canada's public service workforce found that **19% of the workforce felt the government was not responsive enough to COVID-19**, with the top barrier being **unnecessary bureaucracy, limits to information sharing and an inflexible organisational strategy.**<sup>(7)</sup>

Adapting to the new conditions imposed by the pandemic resulted in the social services workforce showing incredible adaptability and agility. Key lessons learned to be further enhanced and incorporated into the "new normal" include<sup>(6)</sup>:



Capitalising expertise through increased practitioner-led leadership for more autonomous decision-making



Empowering the workforce to be flexible in their response whilst managing risks accordingly



Sharing human resources and developing structures or contingency plans to allow agencies to tap into specific skill sets as needed



Collaboratively sharing work spaces across agencies



Enhancing communication through collaborative management structures to support agile and effective responses

### Examples in Practice\*

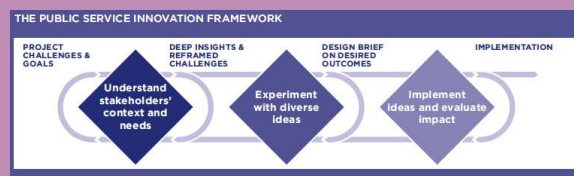


#### Singapore: Public Service Innovation Framework <sup>(2)</sup>

During the pandemic, governments were influenced to adapt policies, redeploy the workforce and adjust service delivery faster than ever. But for Singapore, agility in operations and innovation was seen as an opportunity to exceed consumer expectations of public services well before the pandemic started. Singapore has taken an adaptive approach to embed innovative practices in the public sector through the development of a Public Service Innovation

Framework that provides strategies including behavioural insights, business process re-engineering, data analytics, design thinking, organisational development, scenario planning and systems thinking, blended to design innovative outcomes for citizens.

This has enabled the government to foster a culture of innovation and collaboration, which became critical during the pandemic.



#### Make-a-thons

Part of the innovation and agile response in Singapore is achieved through "make-a-thons". Similar to Hackathons, these events bring together public officers and citizens to define problem statements, interview stakeholders and 'make' or 'hack' prototype solutions to problems.

\*For further information about these examples, please refer to the respective referenced source.

## Why is this important?

The several indirect impacts that COVID-19 will have on children and young people will shape service delivery. To continue to manage and recover from the evolving pandemic, jurisdictions are shifting to continuous improvement initiatives to support the 'return to the new normal'.

## Key Insights in Action



Now more than ever, a more equitable world for children demands a holistic approach to address the indirect impacts of COVID-19 on children's wellbeing, through financial stability, accessible education and health care and consistent service delivery.



Embrace lessons learned during the pandemic by emphasising collective ownership and inclusivity instead of siloed practices, while developing clear priorities, responsibilities and initiatives for sector-wide recovery.



Embed the well-being of children as the unifying purpose for all public and private agencies, establishing a 'whole system perspective' as opposed to 'siloed practices'.



A child-centric approach can help to streamline processes and provide immediate support to the elevated needs of vulnerable children as a consequence of the pandemic.

## Research tells us...

There is likely to be a long-term and indirect impact of COVID-19 on children and young people.



Children and young people have had varied experiences of COVID-19 and we don't yet know the true impact of the virus on children's health and well-being, however, research has shown several indirect impacts on health, well-being and development. <sup>(2)</sup>

Child-level Factors	Family-level Factors	Service-level Factors
<b>Poorer Mental Health</b> 4 in 10 Australian high school students reported severe emotional distress due to the pandemic <sup>(2)</sup>	<b>Poorer Parent Mental Health</b> Parent mental distress tripled from 8% before COVID-19 to 24% during the pandemic in Australia <sup>(2)</sup>	<b>School Closures</b> 13.8 million years of reduced life expectancy estimated from affected long-term education attainment in the US <sup>(2)</sup>
<b>Poorer Child Health &amp; Development</b> 370 million children globally may have missed nutritious school meals <sup>(1)</sup>	<b>Increased Stress &amp; Economic Burden</b> 20% increase in domestic violence calls to Women's Refuge, New Zealand during initial lockdowns <sup>(5)</sup>	<b>Reduced Access to Health Care</b> 31% of unwell or injured Australian children delayed or avoided accessing health care <sup>(2)</sup>
<b>Poorer Academic Achievement</b> 463 million children could not access remote learning in 2020 globally <sup>(2)</sup>	<b>Increased Abuse &amp; Neglect</b> 1.563 M experienced the death of a primary or secondary caregiver or at least one parent or custodial grandparent worldwide <sup>(6)</sup>	<b>Learning, Connection &amp; Care through Tech</b> 90% Of Australian parents are concerned about excessive screen time in 2021 <sup>(1)</sup>

## Approaches to address the impacts of COVID-19 and reimagining the future for a more equitable experience for children <sup>(1, 2, 4)</sup>



**1. Financial Stability:** provide financial assistance for caregivers and whānau to offset COVID-19 impacts.



**2. Education:** address learning gaps and well-being challenges through care and protection by partnering with educators and ensuring digital equity for vulnerable students.



**3. Health Care:** address inequities through engagement with other social sector agencies to target vulnerable cohorts.



**4. Care Delivery:** use digital solutions to create more accessible and efficient approaches to care for children and young people with multiple and complex needs.



**5. Mental Health:** integrate a focus on prevention and early intervention of mental health into care and protection practices.

## Examples in Practice\*



**Recovery Framework: Wales:** Clear objectives and priorities towards recovery <sup>(3)</sup>

Wales has developed a recovery framework outlining clear priorities, goals and objectives for Social Care as a way forward. It is founded on an approach to rebalancing care and support so that there is neither an overreliance on the private sector nor a monopoly in the public sector.

### Overarching Principles

- **Ensure rights- and strengths-based approaches** where solutions are holistic and require a cross-sectoral, integrated systems approach.
- **Work with partners** to share ideas in order to avoid duplication and enhance efficiency.
- **Support system leadership** and encourage action which builds mature partnerships with mutual benefits for all.
- **Ensure all people are at the heart of what we do**, including equality standards that are integral to our approaches, systems and processes.

To ensure continued support, workforce well-being and service providers are at the heart of the framework's priorities



**Queensland Family and Children Commission (QFCC):** A systems theory approach to the child's wellbeing

The QFCC uses a 'systems theory' approach to bring insights into the complex ecosystem of support that promotes a holistic approach to the child wellbeing, safety and protection system, which includes the contributions of health, education, review bodies, police, legal and other services. In examining these interactions as a whole, the QFCC can identify risks or vulnerabilities in the quality of its operations and break down tendencies towards siloed practices.



**US Child Centric Approach:** Optimising service access and delivery

The pandemic highlighted an opportunity to rethink social services funding models in the US. Through a child-centric view, children can obtain coordinated assistance depending on needs instead of being allocated to one particular program. The overall objective is to create a paved path where the child may be supported by diverse programs towards a unique outcome: his/her own health and wellbeing.

\*For further information about these examples, please refer to the respective referenced source.

### Why is this important?

Jurisdictions highlighted the importance of **intelligence sharing** as a key driver for efficient responses during peaks of the pandemic. **Advanced data analytics** across the sector can enable responses to become even more targeted, effective and culturally sensitive.

### Key Insights in Action



Responses to maintaining care and protection can be **enhanced through improved intelligence sharing and integrated data analytics**.



**Data-driven responses can offer a more holistic view of the child** while enabling a targeted service response to the child's needs, including cultural sensitivity.



**A preventive approach enabled through data analytics and strategic information can help anticipate outbreaks and trends** and enable proactive responses

### Research tells us...



Impact of data on the service delivered to children and young people (2, 3, 4, 6)



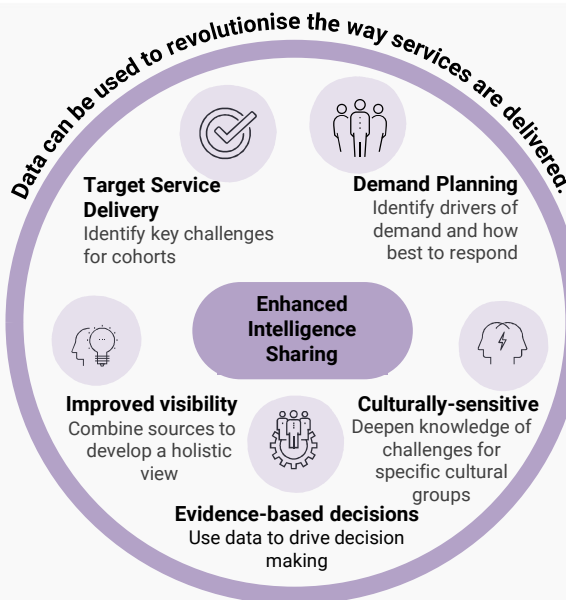
**More time for client facing activities:**

**35-45%** of a case worker's time may be spent on administrative duties, while **less than 25%** is spent on client-facing activities. A reduced administrative burden can leave more time for client contact and support.



**Ensuring care and support resources are available:**

Data and analytics can help identify what resources are available, workforce pressure points and where they can be deployed to ensure care for children and young people.



**Integrated and holistic view of risk:**

A clear picture of a child's risk would typically entail integrating **data from 6 to 10 government agencies**. Intelligence sharing can conveniently enable an integrated view.



**Culturally sensitive support:**

Data and analytics can be used to provide targeted support to the specific needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

### Examples in Practice\*



**Use of Data & Analytics:**  
Health Equity provided by zip-codes

The US is using data to identify indicators of health and social welfare challenges to drive resource deployment. Identified through zip codes, services are targeted to the most vulnerable communities, with the bespoke support they need.

This data is also being used to drive culturally sensitive messaging. Specific health challenges and the demographics of various regions are being used to craft and deliver targeted health communications.



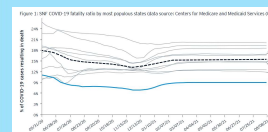
**Victorian Government Child link:** integrated and holistic data platforms <sup>(5)</sup>

The Victorian Government has developed a web-based platform to provide a layer of information about every Victorian child and their key family and day-to-day care relationships, interactions with government services and evidence of child protection orders. This platform will provide integrated insights into the specific needs of children and young people at the fingertips of appropriate users. Data privacy is effectively managed through strict accessibility controls, where key users are professionals who have regular contact with children and families. Insights will enable practitioners to identify and intervene early where there is a well-being or safety concern.



**California Department of Health:**  
Prevention through Prediction <sup>(1)</sup>

The use of data analytics helps the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to proactively find and intervene early where an outbreak might occur. CDPH began collecting information from a daily online web-based/mobile app survey and with past infection compliance data, public health teams could generate predictive analytics to monitor and identify — in real-time — health facilities at a high risk of outbreaks and increased infection.



The Californian Department of Health (blue line) had one of the lowest rates of COVID cases resulting in death rates compared to the other US States, in part due to the use of predictive analytics.

\*For further information about these examples, please refer to the respective referenced source.

## Why is this important?

The pandemic posed significant challenges for the way the social services workforce carried out its role. Embedding flexibility, adaptability and digitalisation into workforce practices can enhance workforce capabilities, partnering and trust, engagement and teamwork.

## Key Insights in Action



The fundamentals of social work are being reconsidered, having to adapt and innovate to evolve with the pandemic and build in digital enablers to support increasing demands.



Critical principles for effective social work practice include: **Clear leadership, established contingency plans and communication channels and well-defined ethical boundaries.**



**Strengthening organisational and workforce capabilities to effectively transition through different phases** of the pandemic are critical, such as adaptive skills, digital maturity and continued care and support across the sector.



The new normal embeds the best of digitalisation and face-to-face practices, **collective action and information sharing, focusing on maximising positive implications** for children and families while striving to maintain adequate levels of connection.

## Research tells us...

The social services workforce and caregivers experienced a range of challenges during the pandemic including <sup>(1, 2, 3, 5, 6)</sup>:



Volatile working environments



Lack of clarity in use of policies, procedures and guidance versus professional discretion and autonomy



Reduced access to PPE, Rapid Antigen Tests and vaccinations



Heightened emotions, ranging from fear and anxiety, through grief and sadness, to guilt and shame



Intensified risk and social inequality



More challenging ethical dilemmas



Limited capacity to respond to children and young people's needs and conflicts due to increased demand

Only **56.5%** of social workers from the United Kingdom felt they were well supported by managers/supervisors during COVID-19 and the government's responses to social care concerns <sup>(1)</sup>

## Building a contingent workforce through digitalisation <sup>(4)</sup>

Social workers have learnt to be more attuned to family dynamics when engaging virtually; new patterns of relationships have emerged with a greater tendency for the family and children to reach out to the social worker rather than wait for scheduled contact. Digital social work can benefit interactions in care residences including youth justice residences as well as support youth court appearances.



Digital technologies offered helpful but incomplete sensorial experiences of the family environments.



Hybrid methods were significant in enabling social workers to manage their anxieties and risks to families and themselves.



Children sometimes reveal more about their lives and narrate their experiences more extensively through a screen.

## Examples in Practice\*



### Social Work During Covid-19: Learning for the Future <sup>(1)</sup>

Through ongoing surveying of over 2000 social workers across the UK from March-August 2020, three distinctive phases were identified in regards to the impact/response of the workforce through COVID-19. The survey also highlights lessons learned to better guide practitioners in the transition between such phases.



**Phase 1:** Chaotic change vs business as usual



**Phase 2:** Doing proper social work?



**Phase 3:** Transforming social work vs settling for the 'new normal'

### Key Lessons Learned

In order to assess, mitigate and redistribute new risks imposed by the pandemic, workers relied heavily on:

- Support from management to embed effective communication
- A supportive and caring work environment

To ensure the highest professional standards as the pandemic persisted, social workers:

- Resolved ethical challenges with slow, deliberate reasoning
- Sought training to diversify and deepen knowledge and skills for new conditions
- Continued home visits and face-to-face work while drawing on existing methods to maintain intimacy
- Built connectedness amongst colleagues to minimise isolation

The following insights were considered upon adjusting to the 'new normal':

- Implement a strength-based approach alongside a robust support plan
- Increase community support to social workers
- Remain ethically vigilant in the transition to the new normal, to avoid individualising problems when resources are limited and problems increase in complexity post-pandemic



### France: Immediate Communication Channels <sup>(7)</sup>

A significant enabler in the response to COVID-19 for France was the rapid adoption of new digital communication channels by the workforce. This has a significant impact both in continuing to provide social services and revealing progressive systemic improvements for the practice as a whole. Social workers leaned into digital tools that provided fast, direct and precise information to families and children. This rapid change also influenced and expedited the digital maturity of the sector, improving traditional bureaucratic and hierarchical methods of approval and response.

\*For further information about these examples, please refer to the respective referenced source.



## Why is this important?

Strengthening collaboration across the sector can support current and future challenges in an integrated and supportive way. Collaboration can help to form a proactive as opposed to a reactive response.

## Key Insights in Action



**Adopting a systemic as opposed to a siloed approach to enable holistic responses and recovery** can build on stakeholders' strengths and enable them to adopt holistic solutions to complex matters.



**Embedding collaboration can enable diversity of thought**, with broader perspectives offering more innovative responses that can be more effective and efficient over time.

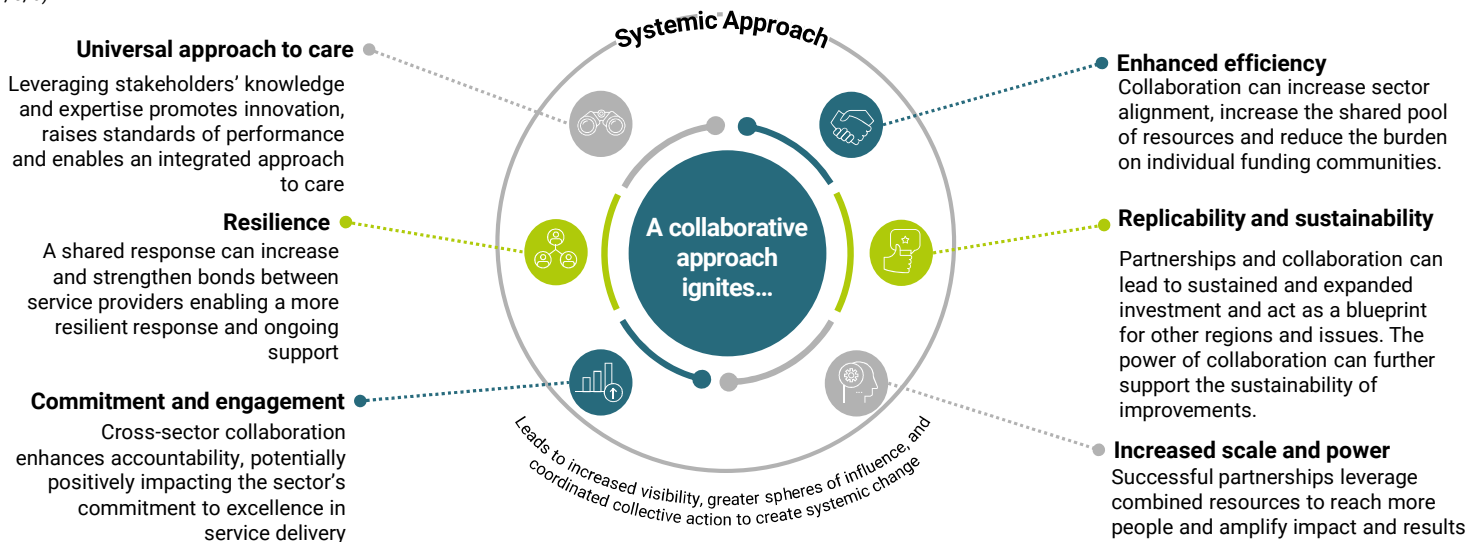


**Promoting cross-sector innovation practices while igniting a governance model** can foster:

- Collaboration across agency/department silos
- Experimentation initiatives to try ideas, test assumptions and gain evidence-based validation for proposals.
- Empathy for all stakeholders to better understand and diagnose issues/opportunities

## Research tells us...

(1, 5, 6)



## Examples in Practice\*



### Singapore Tampines Hub: Innovative approach to collaboration <sup>(3)</sup>

A people-centric and inclusive community hub, 'Our Tampines Hub' (OTH) brings together multiple agencies, services and facilities, purposefully built to serve 12 stakeholder identities. OTH was conceived by applying an Innovation Framework with 13 public-sector stakeholders, as well as with residents of all ages and interest groups.

The OTH combines offerings from 13 government agencies and offers more than 30 community, sports, cultural, civic and lifestyle facilities and services.



### Wales Recovery Framework: Roles of Sector Partners in recovery <sup>(2)</sup>

The COVID-19 Wales Recovery Framework is being carried out in collaboration across the sector with detailed priorities, roles and responsibilities for each of the stakeholders, which include:

- The Welsh Government
- Care Inspectorate of Wales
- Local authorities
- The Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS Cymru)
- Regional Partnership Boards
- Third Sector (local NGOs)
- Registered Providers



### Victorian Government Child link: fostering better collaboration through data <sup>(4)</sup>

Victoria's Department of Education Training (DET) has developed Child Link, which enables the tracking of the lives of more than two million children for their Well-being and potential Risk of Harm. The Child Information Sharing Scheme allows prescribed professionals to share information to promote the well-being or safety of children.

By providing information, Child Link helps authorised key professionals to collaborate with other services and professionals working with the child and their family.



\*For further information about these examples, please refer to the respective referenced source.

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