



EXPLORING LIFE AT 3-8 YEARS
SYSTEMS MAPPING EVENT
SEPTEMBER 2019



HANDS UP MALLEE



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Hands Up Mallee team would like to acknowledge the commitment and generosity of our community and service providers in sharing their wisdom and time to make these steps toward change possible.

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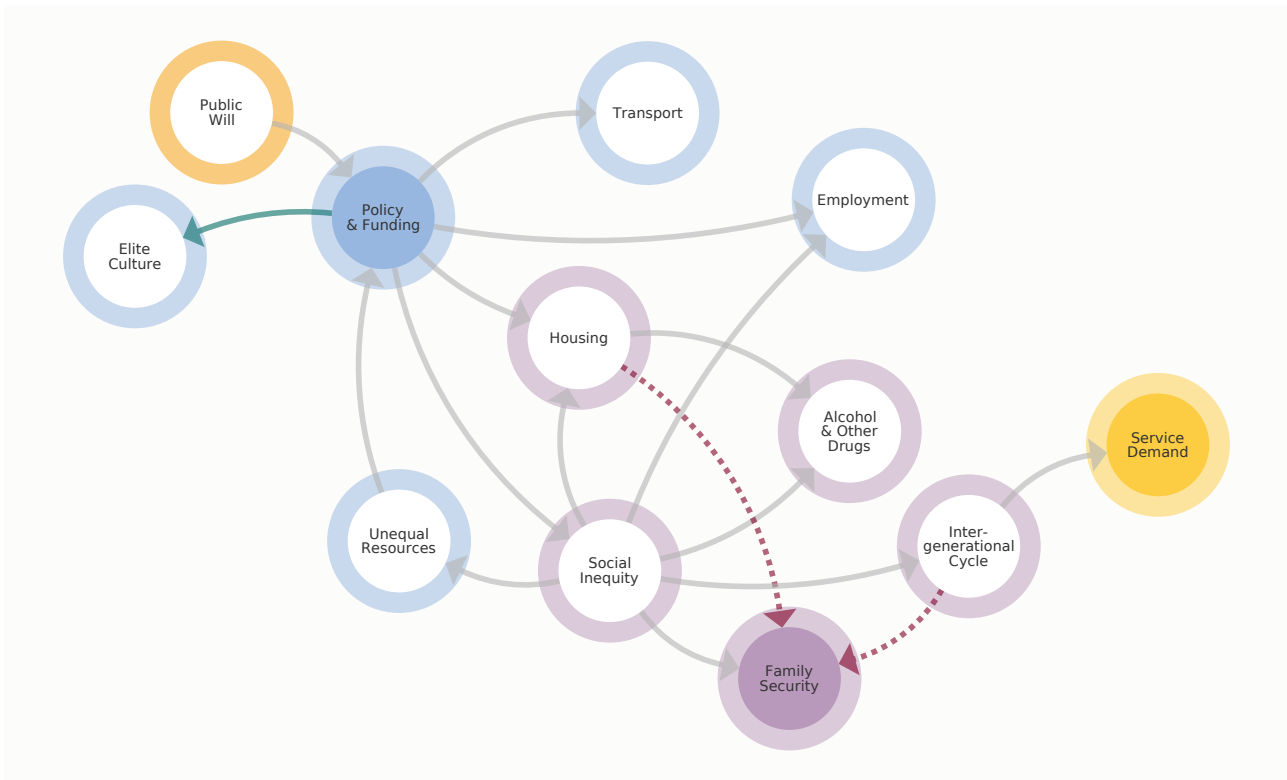




This is the system that plays out every day in our region in the early years space. A system is a set of conditions that hold opportunities and challenges in place.

This system is what supports or stops children in our community having the best start in their life. If it seems complex - that's because it is complex.

This map has been built from what a broad range of services and community members have told us.



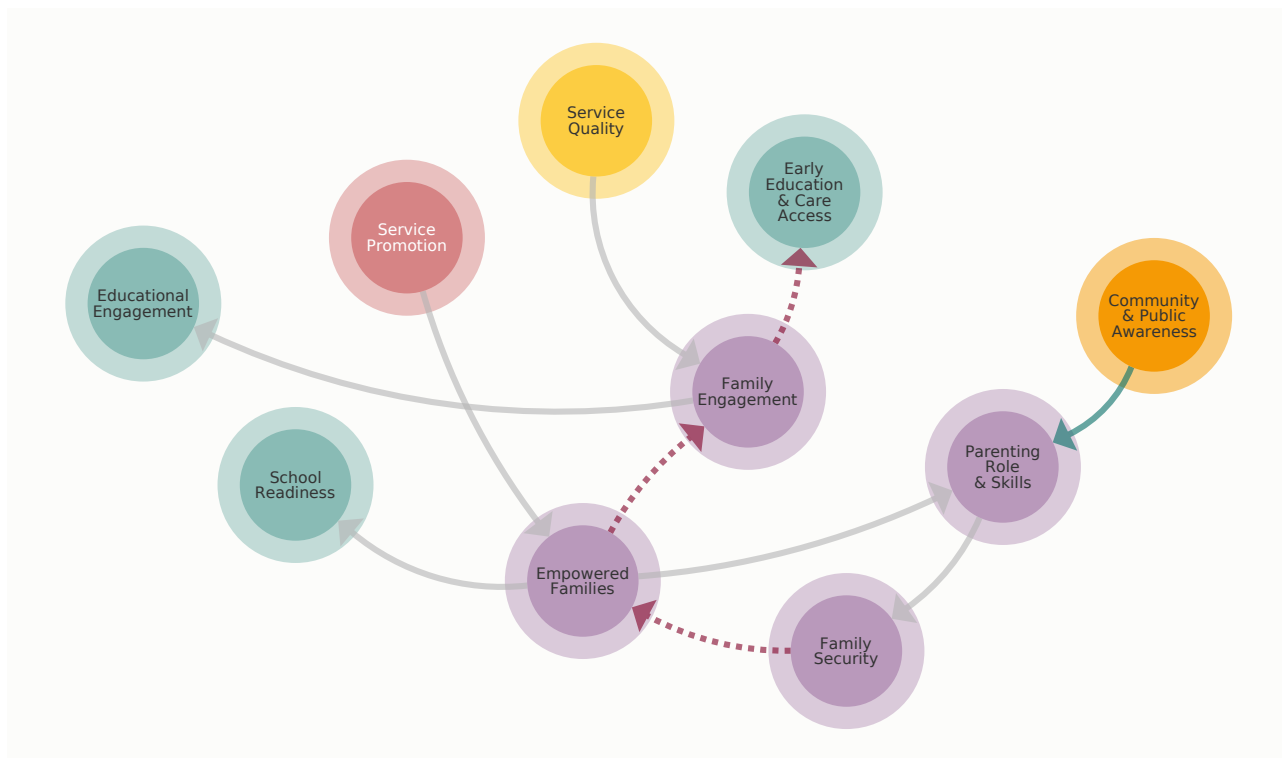
Parents, caregivers, and family life have the biggest influence on children.

Local parents are influenced by their own childhood, their current lives, and their local community.

Employment, housing, physical and emotional well-being, access to transport, income, and parents own life experiences are all factors in building family security.

When transport is an issue for families it makes it difficult to access community and services.

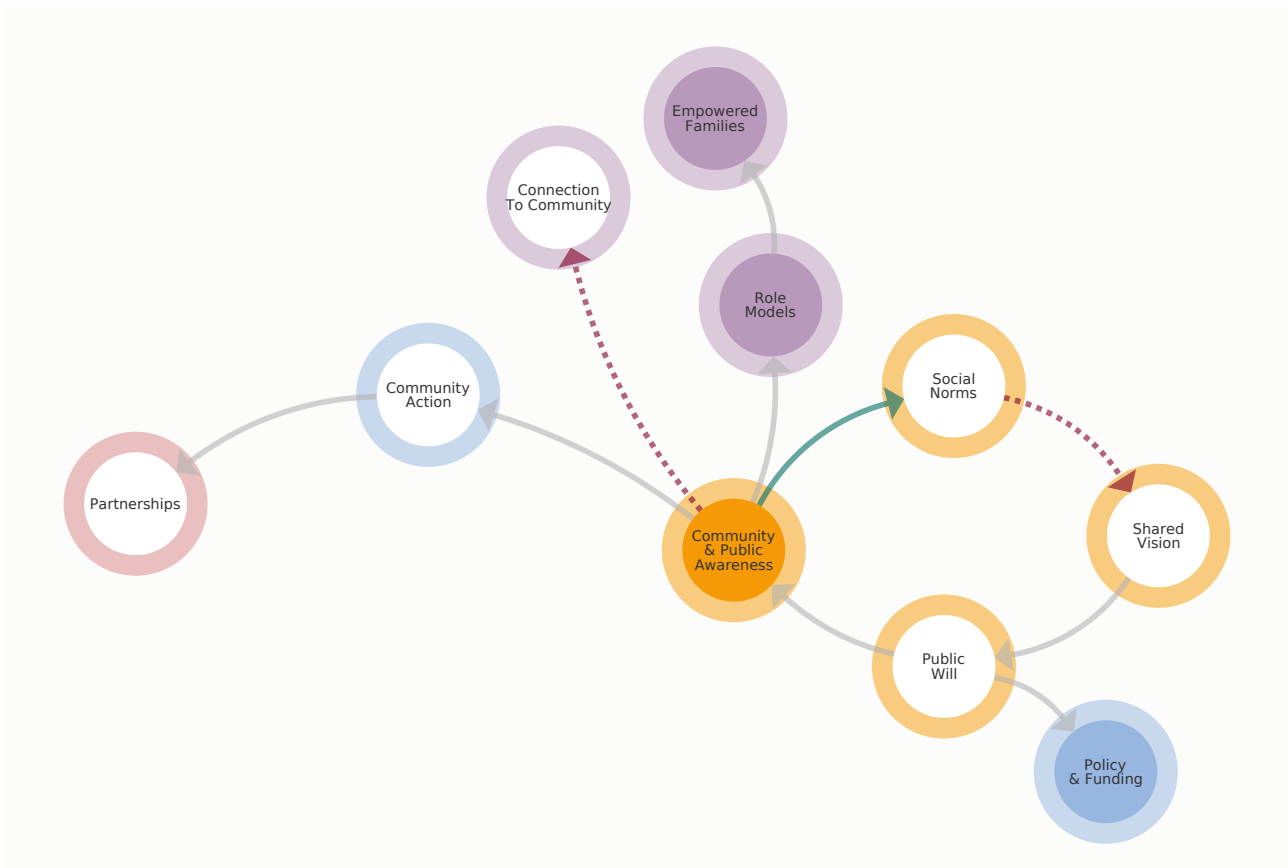
Families who struggle to find appropriate, stable housing, stable employment, or are unable to provide their families with nutritious meals, the capacity to deal with other issues is significantly reduced.



If children are experiencing family security, families are able to be empowered, and engaged in the life of their child. This helps children access early education & care and become school ready. Another way to build family support and security is through connection with peers and trusted role models.

In our community there has been an increase in the promotion of the families' role as their child's first educator. A wide range of services and programs are offered to support positive role modelling for families.

Working against this is the ongoing inter-generational disadvantage some families in our community experience, which makes it harder for them to create a rich home learning environment and prioritise kindergarten and school attendance.



Community life has the power to add to our knowledge and resources, and to improve our everyday lives.

If our community understands the importance of children having a best start in life, we can create change through policy, community action and role modelling.

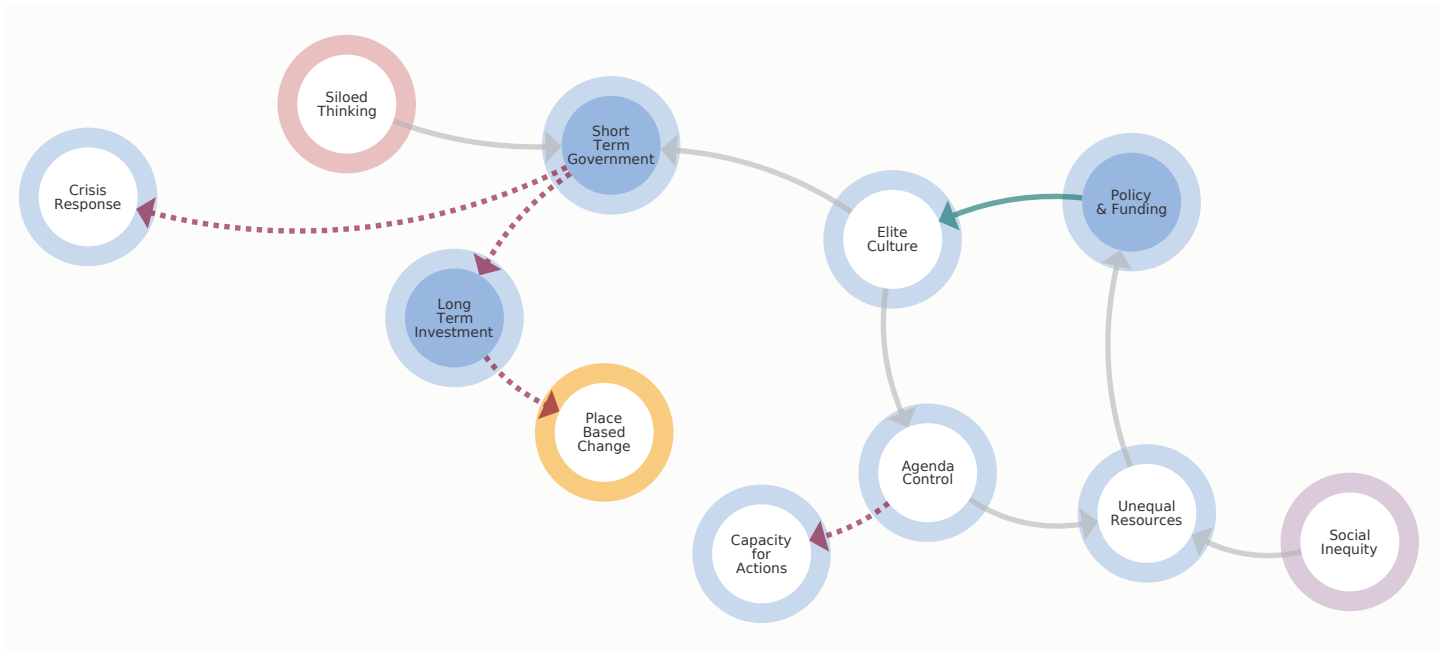
Our community behaviour and values build our social norms. These social norms help us to create a shared community vision and fuel public will.

If we work together our public will has potential to influence government Policy & Funding.

Locally, community awareness of what is needed for a child to have the best start to life is rising. However parents access to social connection is decreased due to them feeling judged and stigmatised in our community.

Language barriers also decrease access to the broader community.

SHORT-TERM GOVERNMENT, SHORT-TERM INVESTMENT

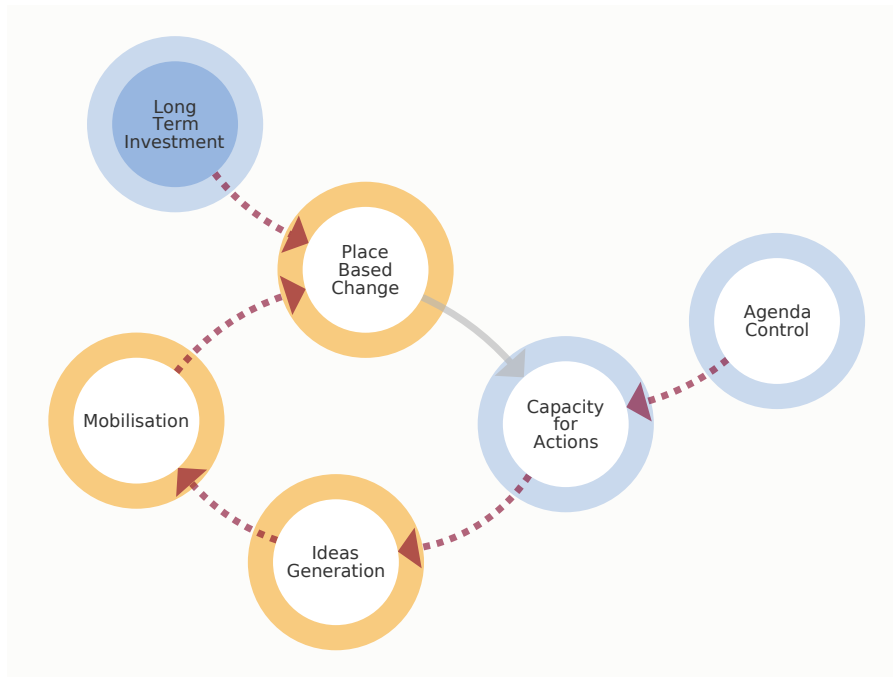


Government policy is influenced by unequal resources and control over political agendas that come from a government that lacks representation of true community voice. This disconnection from community voice results in solutions and policy that are not appropriate for the needs of the community.

A 4-year cycle leads to short term government investments in our community.

At the moment, there has been increased investment in early childhood development, such as the School Readiness Funding.

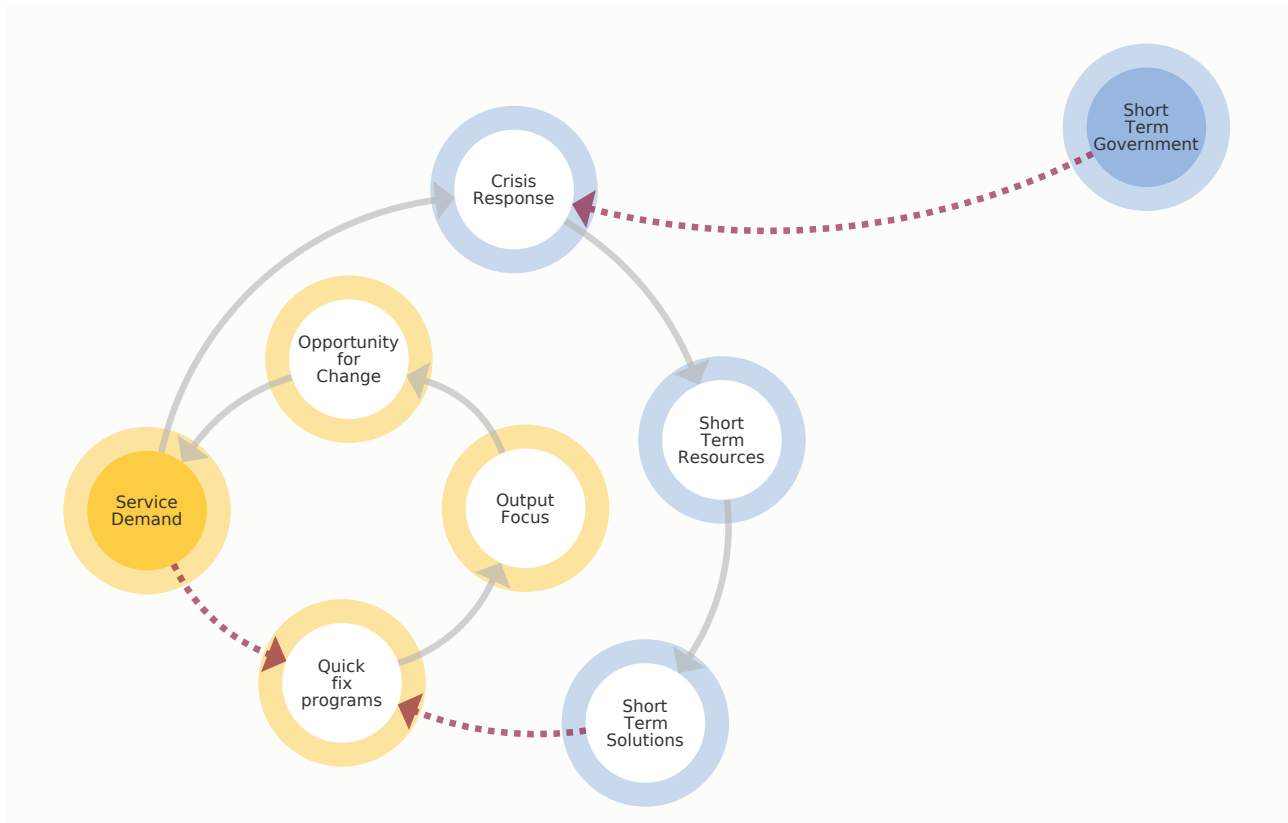
However top-down government, and short-term approaches mean community capacity for action is reduced.



Place-Based Change is when change or an approach is tailored to the region, driven by what the community says is needed.

When community capacity for action is built, local ideas for change are generated, our community becomes mobilised resulting in a greater capacity for place-based change.

Long-term investment from Government is essential for successful place-based change.



Four-year government cycles mean that services are given short-term resources and have less ability to implement longer term solutions.

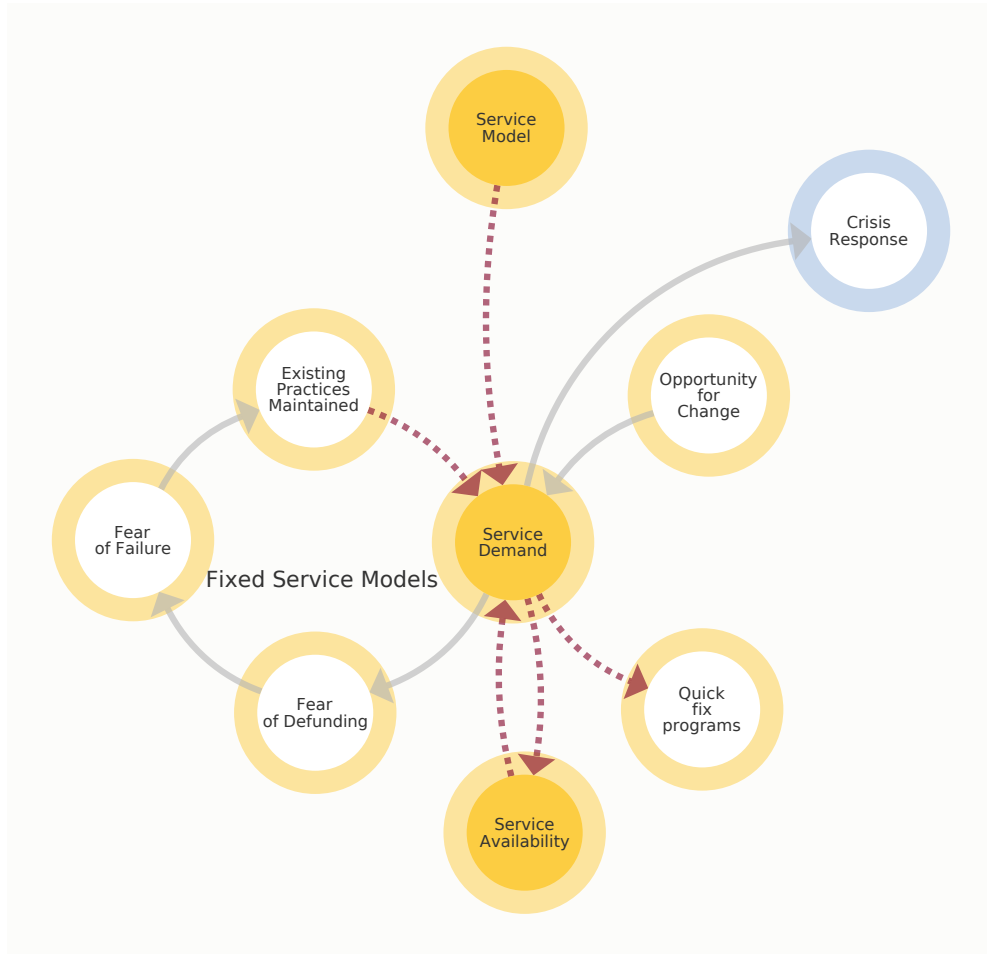
Government policy and funding often favours a reactive response to crisis.

As a result, under pressure to come up with solutions, we create quick-fix programs.

Quick-fix programs can be too focused on the output - how many people are seen, instead of the outcome - how much the program actually helped those people.

The pressure and competition that comes from short-term funding means that services have less accountability to each other, and less opportunity to work together to support local families.

We are still challenged by insufficient resources for prevention and early intervention, and the complexities of government processes. This keeps the demand on services high.

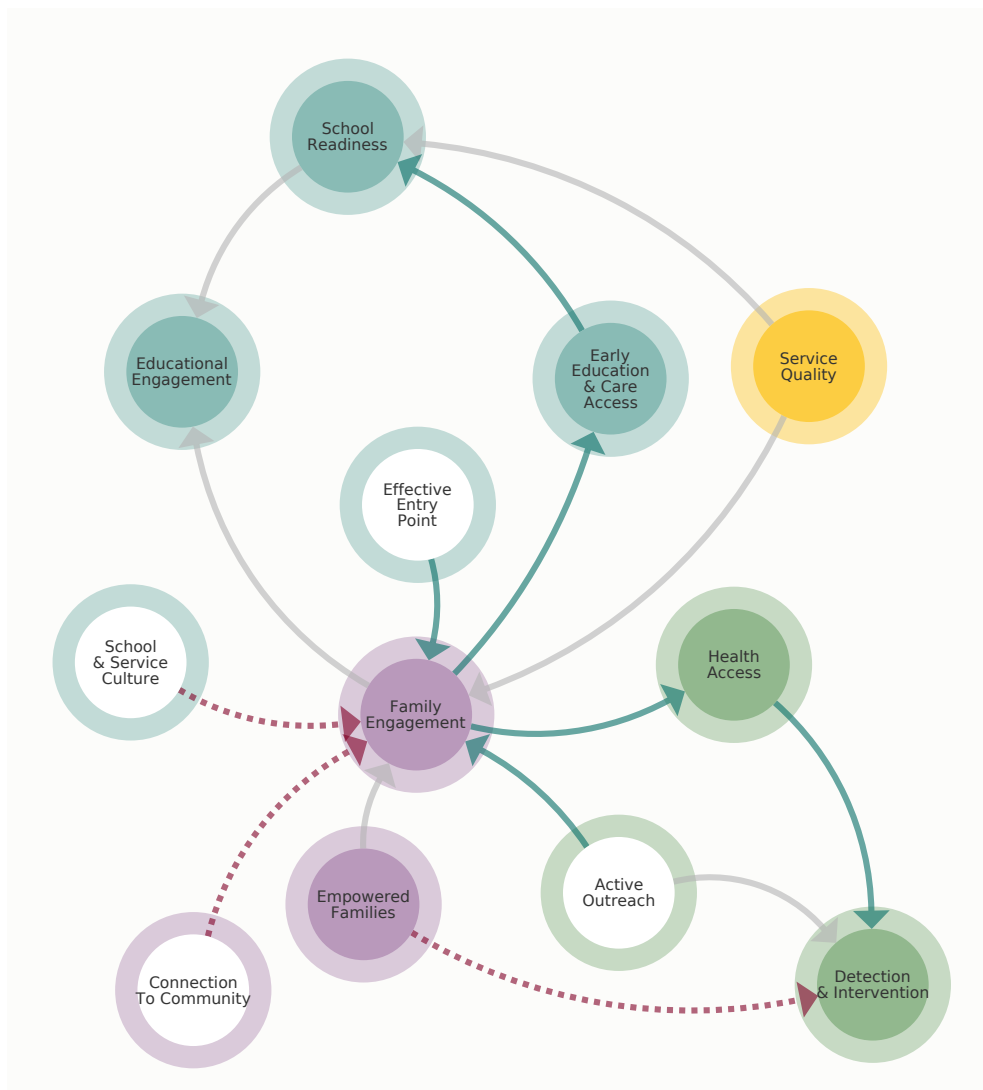


Local services are currently under pressure, or demand, to meet community's immediate needs instead of the underlying causes.

This demand, and the fear of losing funding for their programs, gives services little room to change, keeping them stuck in programs that hold demand in place.

Currently, a high demand on services is increasing waiting lists, and a lack of specialist staff is making it harder for families to access what they need, when they need it.

In addition to this traditional hours do not suit all families in the community. Some families also require active outreach to be connected to services in meaningful way.



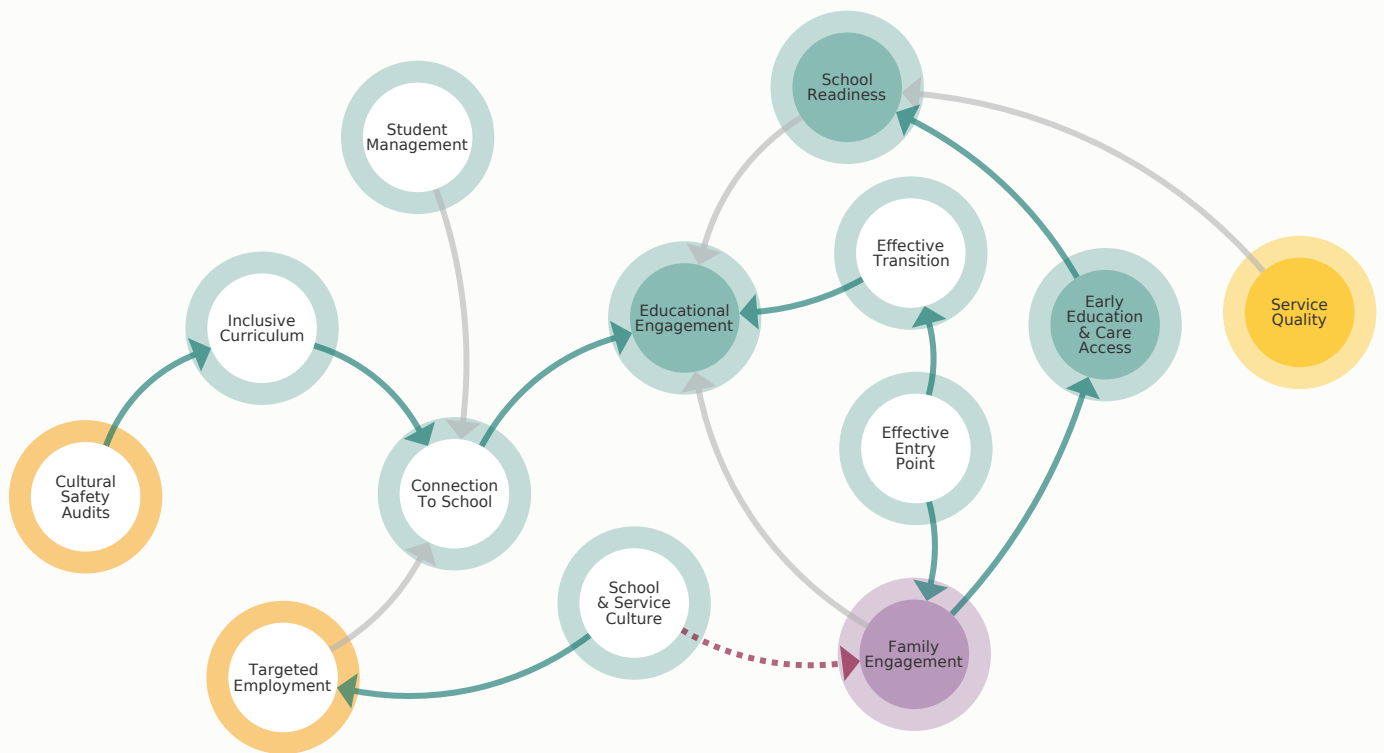
Engagement levels of families also determines access to services.

When our local services are easy to access, and welcoming, families can easily engage, and continue to engage. There are many things that make a service engaging, e.g. culturally safe, aware, affordable, good quality, reputation.

Single assessment intakes, and central welcoming entry points make it easier for families to engage. Working against this however is that families do not perceive services as culturally aware and safe, and fear judgment from service providers.

If a family has the ability to be engaged in a service, it is more likely that a child will have access to things like health, and early education and care. This means children are more likely to be detected early for developmental delays, helping local services intervene in a critical window of opportunity. Local families require further support in recognising developmental delays.

An effective way of engaging local families is by services actively reaching out and providing health checks at regular intervals. If children are experiencing health and development that is on track, they have more opportunity to enjoy and thrive during their early years, enabling them to become school ready.

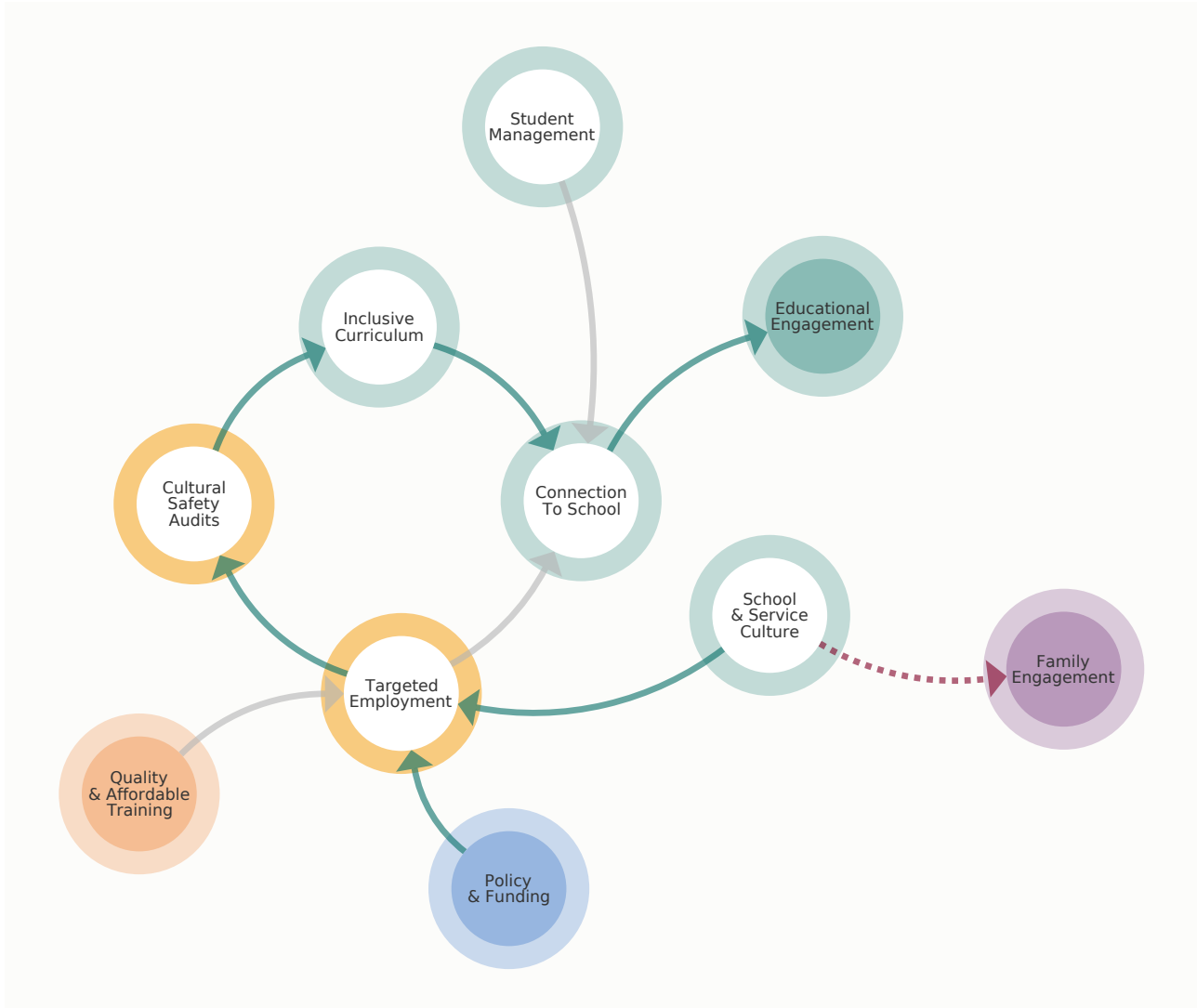


Not all children in our community are ready for school when they begin Prep.

When our local children are able to be school ready and have an effective transition into school, they have better ability to be engaged in their education.

Effective transitions are supported by effective entry points that allow families to engage in a way that is informative, central and non-threatening. Educational engagement is supported by positive student management, meaning the school can help students develop a connection to their school and other students, and ensure they can access full-time education.

School connectedness works by creating spaces that are culturally safe, welcoming & inclusive for children and their families. Local educational professionals require further support to better understand inter-generational trauma, and its effects on the family.

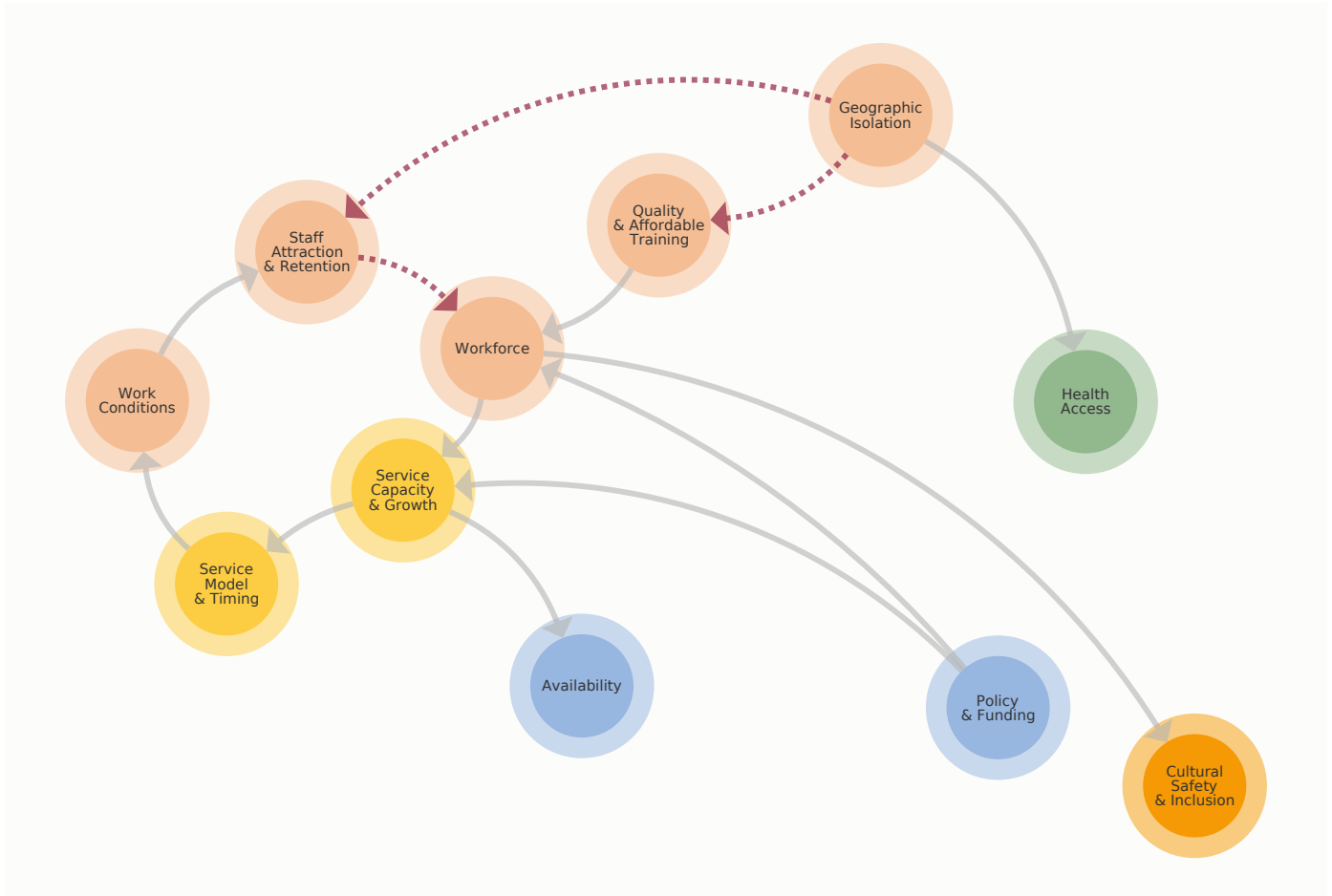


Policy & Funding that values diversity and targets employment of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff, has led to cultural audits of local schools and services.

Cultural safety audits provide support for schools to develop a curriculum that is culturally inclusive.

When schools value and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, kids are taught connectedness and acceptance from an early age, and families feel included from the start.

When families feel welcome, they are more likely to be engaged, helping their children to enjoy and engage in their education.



Our region, located over 560km's from the state capital, is geographically isolated.

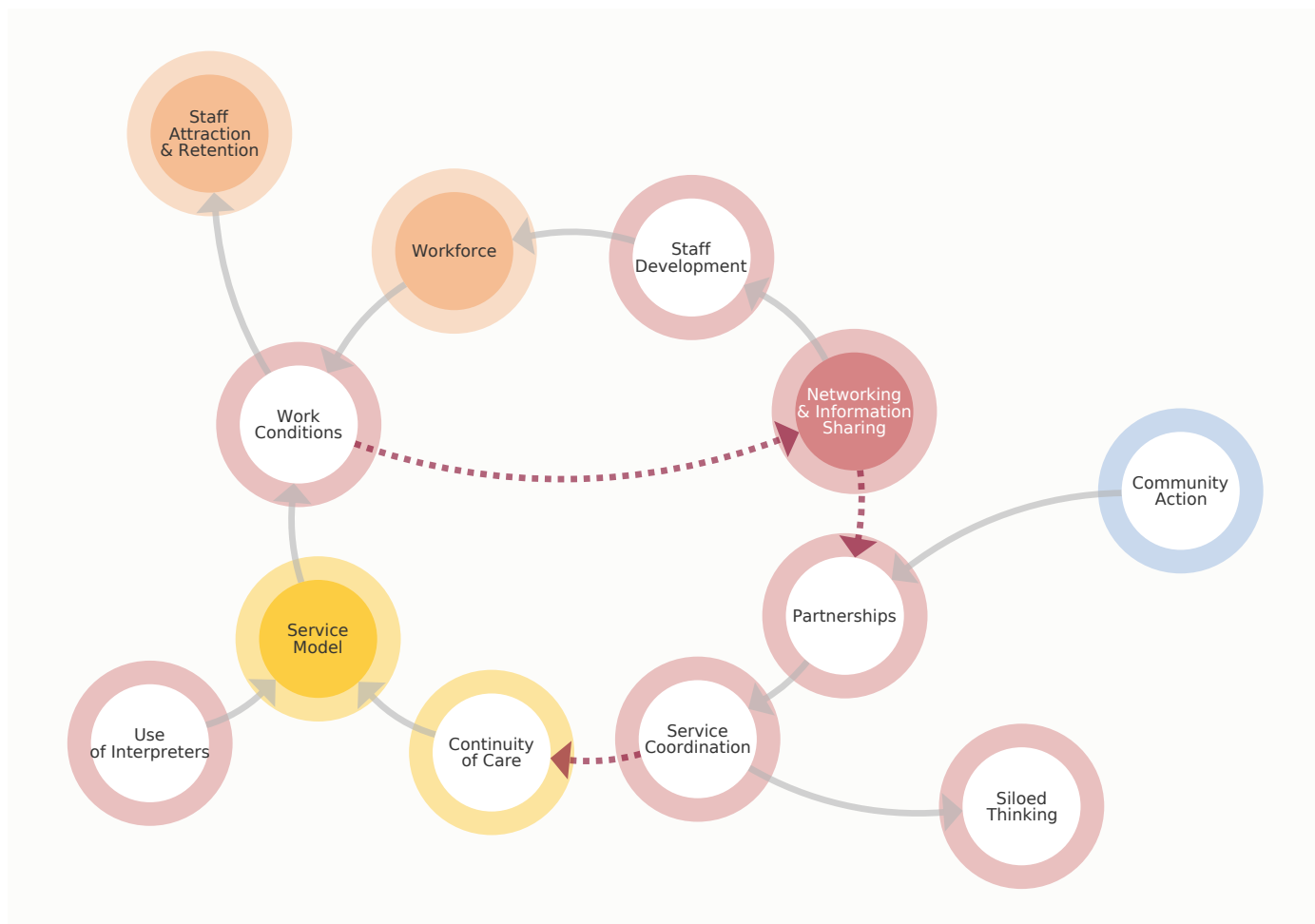
This makes it harder to access quality & affordable training and harder for our local schools and services to attract & retain staff.

When we can't access quality staff or training, the local workforce is negatively impacted.

If we don't have enough staff, the capacity, or availability, of services shrinks.

When services are at capacity, the way they operate, or the service model, changes affecting the quality for clients and workload for local staff.

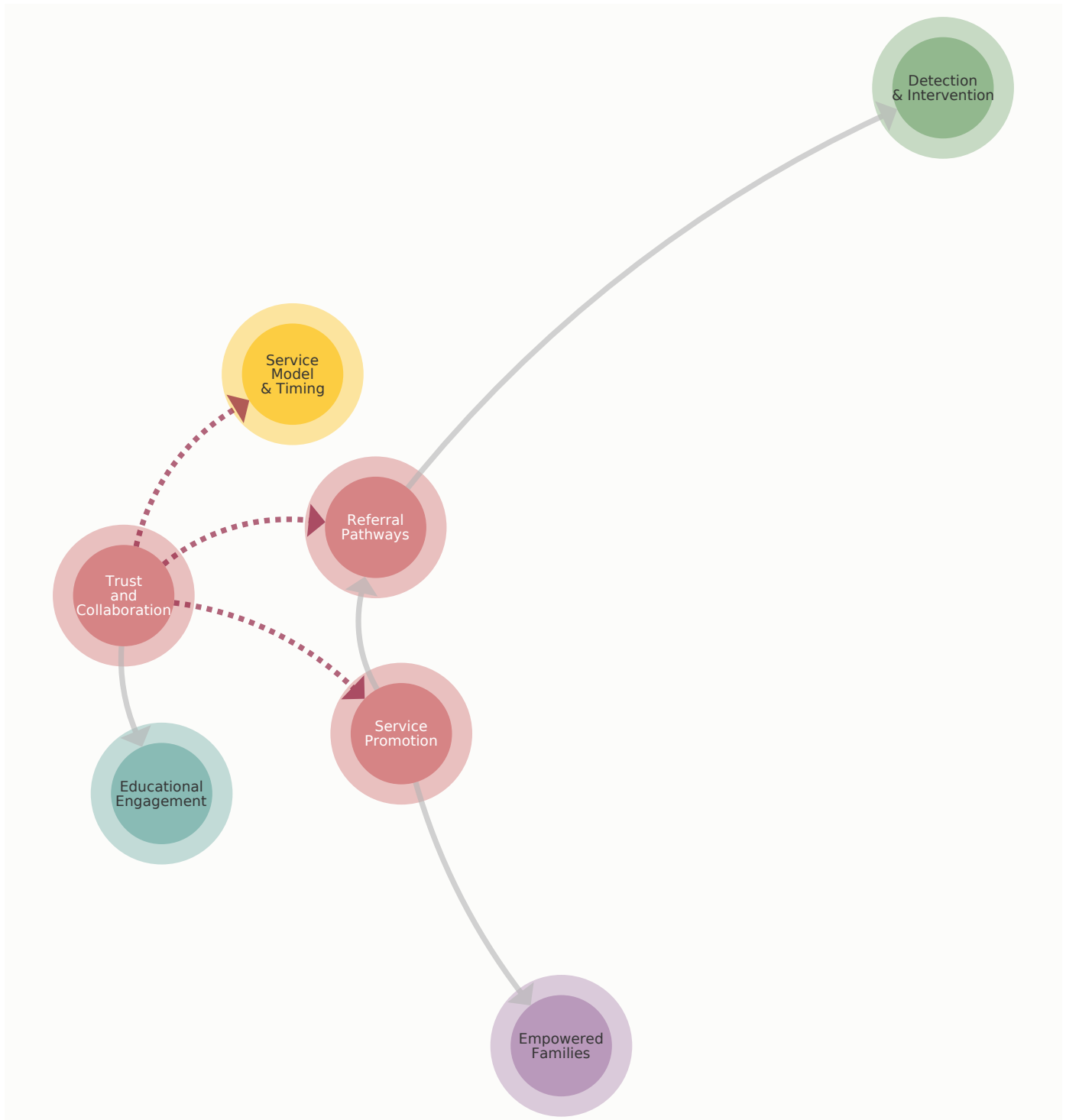
Despite these significant local challenges, we are lucky to have passionate and knowledgeable staff in the early years.



When the workforce is under a high workload, staff have less time to network & share information and knowledge.

This means overall, the community has less capacity to build partnerships to improve coordination between services decreasing the continuity of care for families.

This might look like local families having to tell their story to multiple services, not getting care that is consistent, or having to manage a large number of appointments.

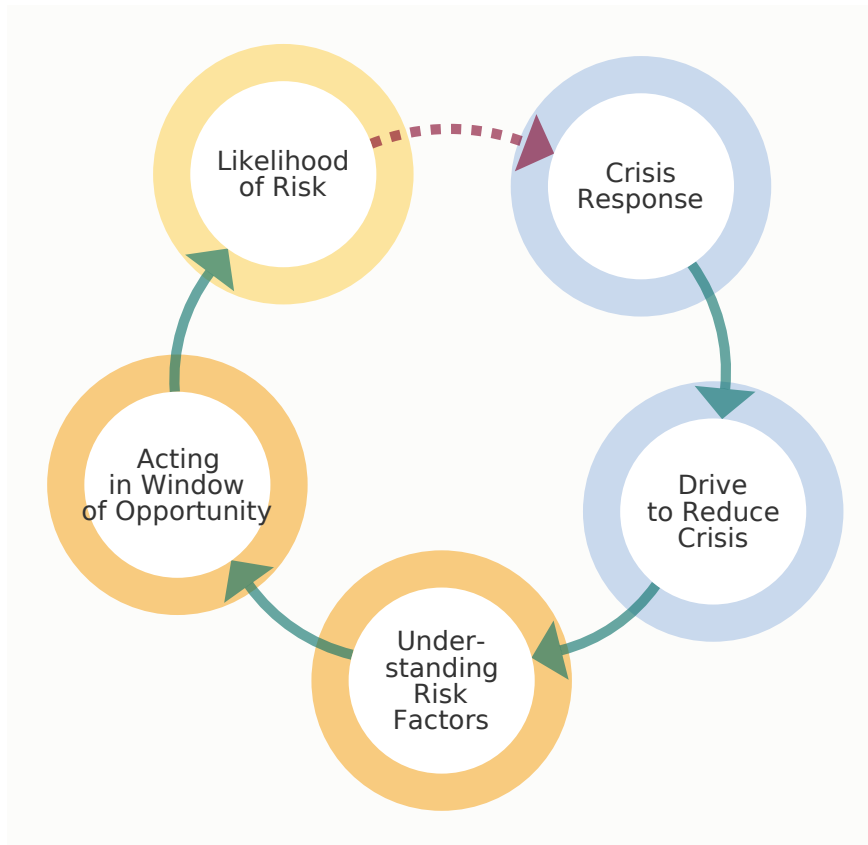


When trust & collaboration is high services are more frequently promoted.

When services are promoted, families have greater knowledge of which services do what, meaning they have more power to act to support their children.

In addition to this when trust & collaboration is high, local referral pathways are stronger. Referral pathways are when staff at services know where they could send clients for help that they cannot provide. If referral pathways are strong, and working, children have a higher chance of developmental delays being picked up early.

At the moment, these pathways between health and education settings could be strengthened.



The central part of our system is our ability to respond to the needs of local children within a critical window of development.

Two key factors affecting this ability are top down government planning, and funding that is reactive to crisis.

These factors keep service demand high, affecting capacity for prevention & early intervention, and access for local families.

These parts also happen to be the most difficult to directly change.

However, when we work on other parts of the system these changes ripple across the system, shifting and improving our capacity to respond to the needs of local children, within the critical window. This is our ultimate goal.

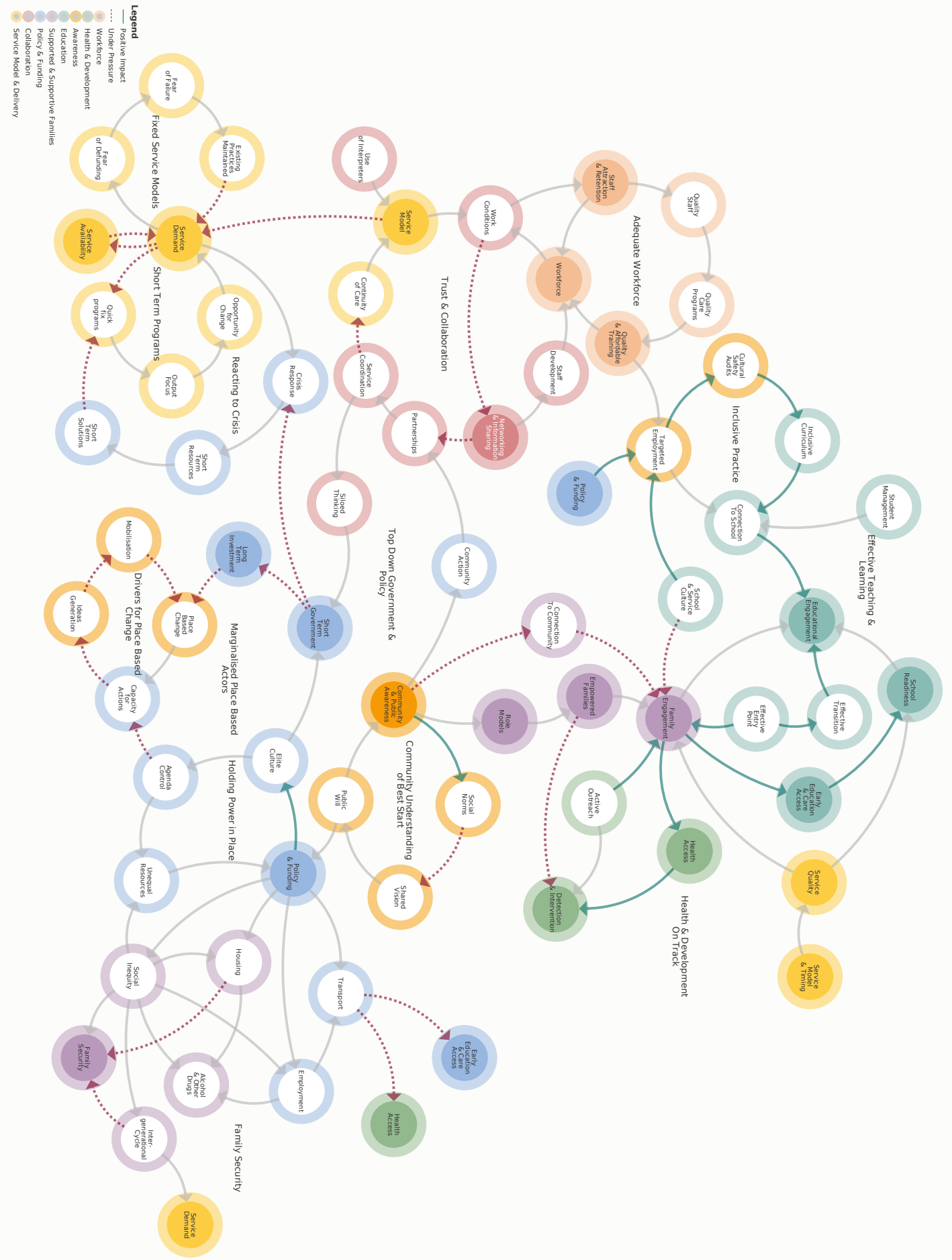
A more powerful way to tackle complex problems is to use a systems approach to:

- address the causes instead of the symptoms
- change the system rather than the people
- change to suit the local community rather than a one-size fits all approach

ITCHERY



FULL SYSTEMS MAP



KEY POLICIES

Key Government policies and funding influencing ages 3-8

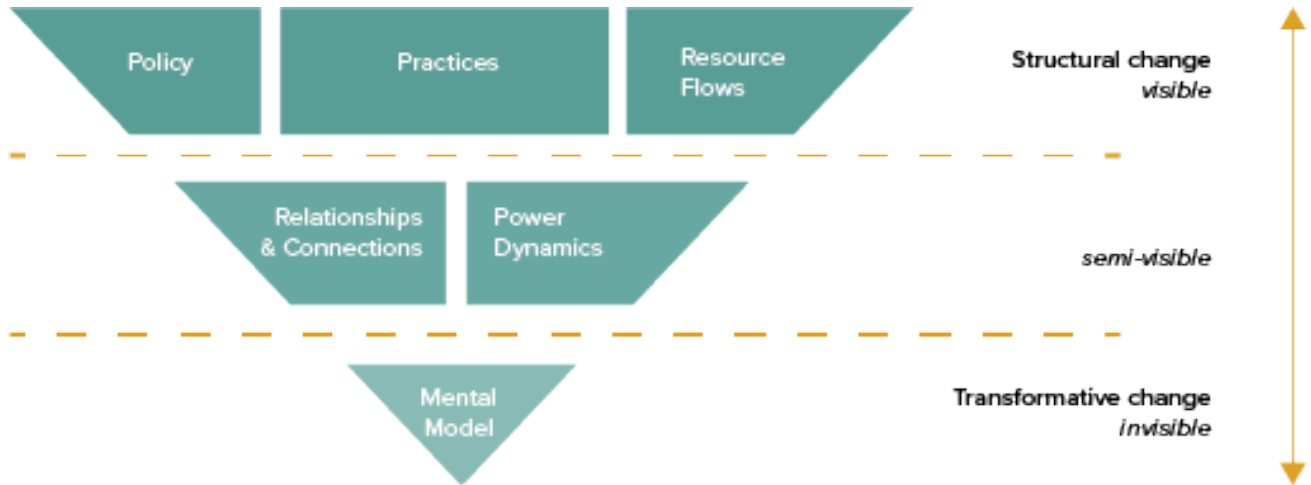
- National Quality Framework
- National Standards and Regulation
- Enhanced Maternal & Child Health
- Childcare subsidy
- Supported playgroups
- Kindergarten fee subsidy
- Early start kindergarten
- 3 year old kindergarten
- Best Start
- School readiness funding
- Vulnerable children's reform
- Stronger Families Stronger Futures
- NDIS
- Employment
- Parents Next
- Reconciliation
- Indigenous kindergarten program
- Murrung: Aboriginal education plan 2016-2026
- Municipal Early Years Strategy

RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTORS

PROTECTIVE FACTORS	RISK FACTORS
INFANCY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate birth weight Attachment and nurturing relationship with caregivers Material wellbeing Adequate nutrition and breastfeeding Stimulating home learning environment Access to health and social care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low birth weight Difficult temperament Insecure attachment and harsh responses from carers Inadequate housing Low parental aspirations for child Parental substance misuse Toxic stress
PRESCHOOL	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-regulation, secure attachment Cognitive skills, early mastery of skills, planning and problem solving ability Communication and language skills Positive peer relationships Material wellbeing Adequate nutrition and breastfeeding Stimulating home learning environment Access to health and social care Access to high quality early learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult temperament Insecure attachment and harsh responses from carers Inadequate housing Low parental aspirations for child Parental substance misuse Low parental expectations
PRIMARY SCHOOL	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early academic achievement in literacy and numeracy Positive peer relationships Preference for pro-social solutions to interpersonal interactions Self-efficacy and self-esteem Time in emotionally responsive interactions with parents Consistent and language based discipline Relationship with adults outside family Positive communication with parents Positive teachers relationships and perceived teacher support Parent engagement in learning and schooling School policies and practices to reduce bullying Extra-curricular activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor academic achievement Negative cognitions about self, disengagement, emotion-focussed coping Poor social skills and poor quality peer relationships Parental depression Lack of parental warmth, high hostility, harsh discipline Overly permissive parenting, favourable attitudes to drugs and alcohol Low parental aspirations Family conflict and parent-child conflict Stressful life events Positive peer attitudes to alcohol and drugs

Better Systems, Better Chances. A review of research and practice for prevention and early intervention. ARACY (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth) Collaboration, evidence and prevention. <https://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/area?command=record&id=207>

THE SIX CONDITIONS OF SYSTEMS CHANGE



Policies: Rules, Regulations, Priorities (formal and informal)

Practices: Organisational and practitioner activities targets to addressing and making progress

Resource Flows: How money, people, knowledge and information are allocated and distributed

Relationships and Connections: Quality of connections and communication occurring between actors

Power Dynamics: Which individual and organisations hold decision-making power, authority and influence (both formal and informal)

Mental Models: Deeply held beliefs and assumptions that influence one's actions

Water of Systems Change. John Karma, Mark Kramer, Peter Serge, June 2018. FSG reimagining social change. https://www.fsg.org/publications/water_of_systems_change

For a more detailed diagram on how to change a system see: <http://enablingchange.com.au/systems.php>



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