**Communication about DHHS funded Family Violence Flexible Support Packages in Hume Moreland Catchment**

**Guidelines for Professionals**

**Background**

Uniting (formerly Kildonan UnitingCare) has been funded by DFFH to provide Family Violence Flexible Support Packages to victim-survivors of family violence in the Hume Moreland catchment.

Family Violence Flexible Support Packages in the Hume Moreland catchment are delivered by Uniting in accordance with the *“Family Violence Flexible Support Packages (FSPs) Program Guidelines”* (Family Safety Victoria (FSV) & Victorian Government, July 2021).

This document outlines *‘program guidelines…with detailed information about Flexible Support Packages (FSP), to ensure consistent delivery of the program in Victoria’[[1]](#footnote-1)*.

**Purpose of Family Violence FSPs**

Family Violence FSPs are available to people who are experiencing or have experienced family violence (victim survivor). Family Safety Victoria recognises the gendered nature of family violence, consistent with the Royal Commission into Family Violence which noted that *‘the significant majority of perpetrators are men and the significant majority of victim survivors are women and their children’[[2]](#footnote-2)*.

Women alone and women with children are therefore expected to be primary recipients of the flexible support packages. However, in recognition of the diverse experiences of family violence experienced by Australian Aboriginal people, people from culturally diverse backgrounds, people with disabilities, people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, gender diverse and intersex community and older people experiencing elder abuse, victim survivor will be used as an inclusive term.

Family Violence FSPs will deliver a personalised and holistic response to victim survivors experiencing family violence, by assisting them to access support to move out of crisis, stabilise and improve their safety, well-being and independence into recovery.

**Available Funds**

Uniting is funded to provide a number of individualised packages, with an average of $3,400 per package, funding up to a maximum of $10,000 can be supported depending on client need and risk.

As the service provider for Family Violence FSPs in the Hume Moreland catchment, Uniting is accountable for delivering a specified number of packages funded by DFFH to deliver better outcomes for victim survivors of family violence.

Service providers are required to collect data on a range of outcome indicators. Quarterly reporting to DFFH/FSV is required via a detailed acquittal template with de-identified client information and by information collected and stored on the FSP Portal (online database). This requires regular monitoring of expenditure against individual case/support plans and agreed payment arrangements.

**Assessment and Allocation of Family Violence FSP’s**

Uniting will assess and allocate Family Violence FSPs in accordance with the guidelines outlined below.

***These updated guidelines are in response to and align with the Family Violence Flexible Support Packages (FSPs) Program Guidelines released by FSV/DFFH, October 2021.***

**Purpose and principles**

An FSP is available for victim survivors of family violence and aims to deliver a tailored and holistic response to assist victim survivors in several ways including transition from crisis, improvement of safety, wellbeing and independence, in a way that is sustainable and long-term.

FSPs must be administered in accordance with the following principles:

* Risk and safety focus: the safety and well-being of victim survivors is paramount
* Person-centred empowerment: victim survivors are empowered to lead and make informed choices about the package, supports they need to meet their goals, improve their well-being and safety, and recovery from family violence
* Inclusion and equity: understanding of culturally appropriate service responses for victim survivors from a range of backgrounds. This includes, but is not limited to, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander victim survivors, victim survivors with disabilities, victim survivors from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, older victim survivors, and victim survivors who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, gender diverse or intersex
* Child and young person-centred practice: children and young people are recognised as victim survivors in their own right
* Support system wide responses focussing on perpetrator accountability and working collaboratively to keep perpetrators in view
* Commitment by service providers to build and maintain effective partnerships, collaborate, communicate and share resources with other agencies in order to maximise opportunities for victim survivors to achieve their goals

**Target Group and Eligibility**

Packages can only be distributed to victim survivors of family violence who have a case management or support plan and who live in (or are moving into or out of, or have connections to) Hume & Moreland local municipalities.

FSPs are available for victim survivors **who meet all** the following criteria:

* Have experienced family violence that has current or ongoing impact; and
* Are planning to leave an abusive situation or have the perpetrator removed from the family home; and
* Are receiving support from a specialist family violence practitioner or other support service practitioner that is:
  + Prescribed as Tier 1, 2 or 3 under MARAM requiring either Intermediate or Comprehensive risk assessment and risk management, and
  + Able to provide continuous support, including ongoing risk assessment and risk management to the victim survivor until the FSP (and/or PSI) package is complete
* Have recently completed (either within the previous 2 weeks or after a new incident of family violence – whichever is most recent) Intermediate or Comprehensive MARAM risk assessment and safety plan
* Case management/support plan in place, inclusive of any relevant children

The case management/support plan, based on a risk/needs assessment, must clearly identify how the requested item/s provision can be assisted through access to a Family Violence FSP to support the victim survivor. This includes children who have a case plan in their own right or are included in their care givers case plan.

In addition to the risk/needs assessment, this thorough case management/support plan needs to identify the ways in which an FSP would assist the victim survivors:

* To establish sustainable arrangements that support their long-term health, wellbeing and financial stability and independence
* In preventing unnecessary intervention by child protection; &
* In leaving their current family arrangements in which family violence is occurring.

One flexible support package will be available per case managed support period. A support period is defined as an episode of support provided by the applicant agency from screening through to service delivery. A subsequent package for future presentations (at the same or a different service) may be provided based on assessed risk and need, where a new case management/support plan is in place.

In cases where a package request exceeds $10,000, contact must be made to FSV by the Manager responsible for FV FSPs in Uniting to discuss the circumstances to inform a decision.

**Priority Access**

To ensure equity of access to packages, FSP Providers are required to implement demand and prioritisation measures.

Priority will be given to:

* Victim survivors (adult and child) at highest risk from family violence
* Victim survivors experiencing significant financial hardship
* Victim survivors who are unlikely or unable to access other forms of brokerage and financial supports in a timely manner

**Key Requirements and Features of FSPs:**

1. The provision of the flexible package must represent the **most cost effective, timely and appropriate response to meet** **the outcomes identified in the case management/support plan**. Other avenues for support must be exhausted prior to application for an FSP. However an FSP can be used where available resources (eg local, state or commonwealth government services) cannot be provided in a timely manner.
2. The **case management/support plan needs to identify the way in which a flexible support package would support the victim survivors** to: establish sustainable arrangements that support their long-term health & wellbeing; prevent unnecessary interventions by child protection; & leave their current family arrangements in which family violence is occurring.
3. The package is applied for and provided **in conjunction with a case manager/practitioner** who has developed a comprehensive case management/support plan with the client. This plan outlines goals and service interventions/support needs, and services/items needing to be purchased, and how access to funds from the FSP will assist. It also needs to detail a commitment for the plan to be regularly reviewed, including risk and safety planning.
4. The flexible funds will be used **in conjunction with other agencies’ support**, to achieve the following outcomes that meet varying needs and priorities: freedom from abuse and violence; suitable and stable housing; good physical and mental health; participation in learning and education; participation and contribution to the economy; financial security and independence; social engagement; and identification and connection to community. This includes addressing children’s needs in their own right and providing linkages for them to appropriate services.
5. Flexible funds can **only** purchase services and goods nominated in the client’s case management/support plan, examples include (but are not limited to):
   * Freedom from abuse and violence: technological safety support, CCTV, mobile phone, personal/property alarm; security doors or lighting (see pages 12 & 13 Personal Safety Initiative (PSI))
   * Supporting physical and mental health and wellbeing: medical or pharmaceutical costs not covered by Medicare or PBS, counselling or specialist services
   * Suitable and stable housing: public or private housing debt, rent in advance, rent arrears, relocations costs, bills for utilities and phone, travel costs, furnishings and whitegoods in newly established housing
   * Participation in learning and education: schooling, education costs, workforce readiness (e.g. adult education/TAFE course/school supplies for children)
   * Financial security and independence: basic material needs including food, clothing, care packs, utility debts, care or placement of pets, outings, financial counselling, wellbeing courses
   * Identification and connection with culture and identity: travel, culturally specific service support, sporting or cultural activities

**Please Note:**

The package cannot fund illegal activity; gambling; products and services not identified in the case management/support plan; support for perpetrators; or cash payments.

For example, emergency accommodation supports are only available from an FSP when no viable alternative is possible. Similar to debts and fines, there are multiple alternative avenues available in the system that must be exhausted prior to support being provided through an FSP.

It also cannot be used to replace or duplicate supports that are available through other funding sources, including Local, State or Commonwealth Government programs, where timely access can occur.

**Application Process**

For any general enquiries about the application, please contact Kristen Dobbie (Family Violence Flexible Support Packages Coordinator) at Uniting on 9302 6100 or email [hmfvfsp@vt.uniting.org](mailto:hmfvfsp@vt.uniting.org)

Prior to lodging the application, Valerie Ayres-Wearne (Senior Manager) can be contacted for a secondary consultation via mobile: 0414 507 734 or email [hmfvfsp@vt.uniting.org](mailto:hmfvfsp@vt.uniting.org)

An application form is to be completed & lodged by the Case Manager/Practitioner on behalf of their client. Team leaders/Managers need to endorse applications.

It is preferable to provide invoice/s or quote/s from supplier/s for goods/services requested in your application. Where it is difficult to obtain invoice/s or quote/s it is necessary to provide a clear outline of the amount of money being requested and the anticipated supplier/s (e.g. website catalogue print outs).

Applications lodged after 31 December 2021 need to be lodged via the FSP Portal and completion of the online application form.

**For Part A Application Forms (completed prior to 31 December 2021) please lodge your completed Application Form via email:** [**hmfvfsp@vt.uniting.org**](mailto:hmfvfsp@vt.uniting.org)

Please mark CONFIDENTIAL FVFSP in the subject line.

On receipt of the application, a return email will be sent to the Case Manager/Practitioner acknowledging receipt (refer guidelines below for approval process, timelines and payment arrangements).

The Family Violence Flexible Support Package email: [hmfvfsp@vt.uniting.org](mailto:hmfvfsp@vt.uniting.org) will be monitored daily.

Valerie Ayres-Wearne (Senior Manager), in collaboration with Kristen Dobbie (FV FSP Coordinator), will process these applications.

Applications will be assessed in accordance with priority access guidelines and eligibility and suitability criteria.

The Case Manager/Practitioner will be informed in writing of the outcome of the application, generally within 2-3 days following receipt of the application.

An Approved Application Code will be provided in the email when the application is approved. The Approved Application Code will include:

* Initials of the Case Manager/Practitioner (e.g. AV)
* Agency Identification (e.g. SCH)
* Description of the package (e.g. FV FSP)
* Number allocated for the package at the time of approval (e.g. 005)
* Or will be allocated automatically for applications submitted through the FSP Portal

**Expenditure of Approved Funds**

Generally there is an expectation that the approved funds will be expended within 3 months of receiving the approval email.

However, if there are any delays, or the situation has changed for your client and approved funds are no longer appropriate or necessary, it is important that the worker contact Kristen Dobbie/Val Ayres-Wearne via email [hmfvfsp@vt.uniting.org](mailto:hmfvfsp@vt.uniting.org) within the 3 months to advise the anticipated finalisation date for the package.

**Impacts of the Financial Support on the Client/s**

The Case Manager/Practitioner needs to provide feedback on the impacts of the financial support made available in order to measure impacts/outcomes.

Feedback needs to be provided using Part B: Impacts & Outcomes.

This form needs to be lodged following expenditure of funds. This is generally within a 3 month period (refer Payment Arrangements and Flowcharts).

Any delay in lodging Part B needs to be communicated to Kristen Dobbie/Val Ayres-Wearne via email [hmfvfsp@vt.uniting.org](mailto:hmfvfsp@vt.uniting.org)

**FLOWCHART APPLICATION & APPROVAL PROCESS**

**Payment Arrangements**

***Preferred Option: Reimbursement model (Purchase of Goods by Your Agency & Reimbursement by Uniting)***

***Purchasing of Approved Items by the Allocated Case Manager***

* Following receipt of approval for the Family Violence Flexible Support package, the Case Manager/Practitioner needs to obtain an invoice/s from the supplier/s for specified item/s, if they have not already done so. These then need to be lodged with their Supervisor/Team Leader/Manager for sign off. *Internal Agency payment requisition processes would be followed*.
* When the goods/services are paid for, the receipt/s of payment of goods/services provided to your Agency will be needed to support the reimbursement process.

***Process for reimbursement***

* An Agency Tax Invoice for reimbursement of the payment/s then needs to be organised by the Case Manager/Practitioner in consultation with their Team Leader/Manager, in accordance with internal Agency guidelines. (*Refer below for specific details needed on Agency Tax Invoice to Uniting).*
* It is vital that there is proof of payment, detailing what has been purchased and the amount for individual items. (This may take the form of a receipt, remittance advice, or supplier invoice).

To invoice Uniting for reimbursement, you need a Tax Invoice from your Agency with the following details:

Bill To: Accounts Payable

Uniting (Victoria & Tasmania) Limited

PO Box 339

Dallas VIC 3047

& Deliver To:  same as the above

Other details (standard on Tax Invoices):

* Invoice No:
* Ext Doc No: FV Flexible Support Package
* Customer No:
* Document Date:
* Due date:
* Payment Terms:

In the Description, please quote the Application Approval Code:  e.g. AV SCH FV FSP 005

Please list the total unit price plus any GST paid.

Copies of documents detailing proof of payment to individual suppliers (e.g. the receipt of payment from suppliers for paid goods/services or the remittance advice) need to be provided with the Agency Tax Invoice.

Please provide your Agency bank details to enable an Electronic Transfer when sending the Agency Tax Invoice and supporting documentation.

* The Agency Tax Invoice for reimbursement with documents detailing proof of payment then needs to be sent to Kristen Dobbie/Val Ayres-Wearne via email: [hmfvfsp@vt.uniting.org](mailto:hmfvfsp@vt.uniting.org)
* On receipt of these documents, reimbursement to your Agency will be organised in a timely manner.
* A copy of the remittance advice acknowledging payment by Uniting to the Agency will also be forwarded to the Case Manager/Practitioner/Team Leader/Manager and/or the Agency’s Finance person.

***Alternative payment option (non-reimbursement):***

* The Case Manager/Practitioner would seek payment document/s from specific supplier/s to the approved amount. Kristen Dobbie/Val Ayres-Wearne will contact the Case Manager/Practitioner regarding the specific payment document/s required.
* These need to be lodged for payment with Kristen Dobbie/Val Ayres-Wearne via email [hmfvfsp@vt.uniting.org](mailto:hmfvfsp@vt.uniting.org) . A return email will be sent acknowledging receipt of the document/s for payment.
* Uniting payment request/s would then be prepared by Kristen Dobbie/ Val Ayres-Wearne and sent to Uniting Accounts Payable for payment.
* Following payment an email will be sent to the Case Manager/Practitioner/Team Leader confirming payment with remittance advice attached (where appropriate).
* The Case Manager/Practitioner will then be able to arrange delivery of the goods/services for their client.

***Please note for Uniting staff:***

* Following approval of the application, the Case Manager/Practitioner will be notified by Kristen Dobbie/Val Ayres-Wearne regarding the specific payment document/s required.
* The Case Manager/Practitioner would then forward the payment document/s to Kristen Dobbie/Val Ayres-Wearne via email [hmfvfsp@](mailto:hmfvfsp@)vt.uniting.org for sign off and processing.
* This documentation will then be lodged with Uniting Accounts Payable for payment.
* Confirmation of payment will be provided to Case Manager/Practitioner following payment.
* The Case Manager/Practitioner will then be able to arrange delivery of the goods/services to the client.

**Personal Safety Initiative (PSI)**

Family Safety Victoria is undergoing a state wide rollout of the PSI (commenced in 2017, PSI Operational Guidelines released September 2019 <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/personal-safety-initiative-operational-guidelines>) providing a platform to strengthen the appropriateness, suitability and quality of personal safety, security and technology responses delivered in Victoria, ensuring consistency and effectiveness as part of a broader plan for the safety, stability and wellbeing of victim survivors. Local PSI Coordinators are positioned in specialist family violence agencies in each of the 17 Department of Health and Human Services Local Areas[[3]](#footnote-3). In Hume Moreland, the Local PSI Coordinator is located at Berry Street Services in Eaglemont – [northernpsi@berrystreet.org.au](mailto:northernpsi@berrystreet.org.au)

For Case Managers/Practitioners within specialist Family Violence services a consult with the local PSI Coordinator is required before submitting an FV FSP requesting electronic security items for a client e.g. CCTV, personal duress, etc.

Where a victim survivor is being case managed by a non-specialist family violence service, a secondary consultation with a local PSI Coordinator must be undertaken to discuss the suitability of a PSI response[[4]](#footnote-4).

After the consult, the local PSI Coordinator will provide recommendations, in writing, around safety measures, usually the first step will be recommendation of a safety and security audit. The Case Manager/Practitioner will need to apply for funding from an FV FSP for the cost of the safety and security audit (as recommended by the local PSI Coordinator) before further funds will be considered for electronic security items.

Further consultation, between the Case Manager/Practitioner and the local PSI Coordinator, will occur on receipt of the safety and security audit recommendations. An updated FV FSP will need to be submitted (in accordance with the FV FSP Application Guidelines) to request further funding for any recommended electronic security items, or any other items recommended by the audit and after review and recommendations from the local PSI Coordinator.

To ensure a timely response to any immediate risks to safety, an FV FSP application can be submitted without a PSI consult for a small number of basic safety and security responses including repairs to broken doors and/or windows, lock changes and installation of security doors (where alternative funding sources are not available)[[5]](#footnote-5).

Before a PSI response is implemented for a victim survivor a Family Violence Intervention Order (FVIO) should be sought to exclude the perpetrator from the property. Where a risk assessment has indicated that a FVIO could place the victim survivor at further risk, or there are additional barriers to the victim survivor accessing a FVIO, the case manager should discuss this with the local PSI Coordinator who will consider each situation on a case-by-case basis and determine whether a PSI response is appropriate at that time[[6]](#footnote-6).

**PERSONAL SAFETY INITIATIVE (PSI) PATHWAY - FLOWCHART**

**CONSULTATION & RECOMMENDATIONS**

Case Manager completes PSI Referral form for a consult and contacts local PSI Coordinator to discuss the case and seek their recommendation about the appropriateness of a PSI response

Case Manager determines client needs PSI response funded by FV FSP – MARAM (comprehensive) completed, and safety plan developed with client. FVIO in place.

PSI Coordinator recommends Security Audit in writing via email to Case Manager

**APPLICATION & LODGEMENT**

Case Manager completes FV FSP Application, including request for security audit and any other items – lodges application form with FV FSP Provider, include copy of PSI Recommendation email and all other documentation required to support FV FSP Application

FV FSP Provider approves Package

Case Manager updates FV FSP Application with request for safety & security items – submits form to FV FSP Provider with PSI Recommendation and all other documentation required to support updated FV FSP Application (quotes, etc)

Audit conducted, audit recommendations sent to PSI Coordinator who further consults with Case Manager to review audit – final PSI Coordinator recommendations provided via email to Case Manager

**APPROVAL PROCESS**

FV FSP Provider approves Package

FV FSP Provider does not approve Package – further consultation with FV FSP Senior Manager needed

FV FSP Provider does not approve Package – further consultation with FV FSP Senior Manager needed

1. Family Violence Flexible Support Packages (FSPs): Program Guidelines October 2021 p.6 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Family Violence Flexible Support Packages (FSPs): Program Guidelines October 2021 p.27 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Personal Safety Initiative (PSI): Operational guidelines, September 2019, p12 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Personal Safety Initiative (PSI): Operational guidelines, September 2019, p17 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Personal Safety Initiative (PSI): Operational guidelines, September 2019, p16 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Personal Safety Initiative (PSI): Operational guidelines, September 2019, p17 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)