

**Bayside Peninsula Child & Family Alliance – Flexible funding (COVID provisions) guidelines (Feb 2022)**

1. **Information**

Flexible Funding (FF) is made available to Child and Family Services Alliances by the Department of Families Fairness and Housing. The funding is accessible to DFFH funded Child and Family Service Providers to support the delivery of child and family services within area.

The Bayside Peninsula Area is currently allocated approximately $150,000 per financial year of Flexible Funding. Anglicare Victoria as the Facilitating Agency administers the funding to broker Flexible Support Packages (FSPs)

* **Additional funding stream as at January 2022**

The alliance was formally notified of an additional funding stream to support families during the COVID-19 pandemic, for use until June 30 2023. Allocations were based on the percentage of child protection reports over the 2019-20 and 2020-21 financial years, which has been used as an indicator of the level of family vulnerability with an allocation of $103,899. This stream creates an additional package of funding for Flexible Support Packages (COVID provisions) available to Bayside Peninsula Child & Family Services clients until June 2023.

1. **COVID provisions guidelines**

FSPs (COVID provisions) are considered for use in exceptional circumstances when taking into consideration the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, these packages have been approved to consider additional support that existing FSPs do not.

This takes into consideration the significant financial impact of the pandemic and the increased financial and housing stress placed on vulnerable families.

The following is a summary of the additional supports available under FSP (COVID provisions) funding:

1. Package amount $1500: approval by Partnership Facilitator
2. Packages supporting debt repayment, rental arrears or other financial support: up to $2500 with Program Manager approval and above $2500 approval by alliance Deputy Chair
3. Packages to support items or services $1500-$2000: approval by agency Program Manager and above $2000 approval by alliance Deputy Chair.

Funding guidelines have been extended to support payments where the current FSP’s cannot, inclusive of:

1. Debt repayment
2. Rental arrears + utility payments
3. Food vouchers (excluding alcohol)

FSP (COVID provisions) otherwise utilise the same principles as the existing FSP, with the addition of extended guidelines as outlined above, and higher package amount.

1. **Flexible Funding Guidelines**

As per the [Program Requirements for family and early parenting services in Victoria,](file:///\\avm1fs01.anglicare.local\Frankston\Manager\Flexible%20Packages%20BPA\DHHS%20Policies%20-%20current\AAProgram%20requirements%20for%20early%20parenting,%20family%20and%20placement%20prevention%20services%20in%20Victoria_August%202021%20(1).docx) the use of flexible funding **must be focussed on outcomes and clearly link to the implementation and achievement of goals in the Child and Family Action Plan**.

It is used to:

• enable families to make **positive and enduring change** that will increase parenting capacity, improve family functioning and promote the safety, wellbeing and development of their children and young people.

• provide practical support and services to **minimise children, young people and families requiring more intensive intervention**.

Allocation of flexible funding must be prioritised based on an assessment of greatest need and anticipated positive impacts on children’s safety, stability and development.

It is important to note that whilst the use of flexible support funds to provide practical assistance is helpful in engaging parents, providing practical help is only one aspect of the intervention. If the underlying issues leading to the need for family services intervention are not addressed, then small changes brought about using flexible funding are unlikely to make a sustained difference.

1. **Use of Flexible Funding**

Alliance Flexible funding is intended to provide a one-off package of support to vulnerable children, young people and their families (inclusive of unborn, infants, children, young people, mothers, fathers, parents, siblings, carers, and carer families) accessing support through Child and Family Services , this includes;

* Integrated Family Services (*Brief, Foundation and Sustained Cases*)
* Intensive Family Services *(*G*ood Shepherd PUP*)

*Providers of the Victorian and Aboriginal Family Preservation and Reunification (AFPRR) have flexible funding allocated within their funding and should access this for clients within their programs.*

As agreed by Alliance Agencies, a subsequent FF application for the same family may be submitted for consideration, should there be exceptional circumstances. A rationale for this must be clearly articulated in the application and supported in writing by the Program Manager. This rationale will be recorded on the DHHS funding acquittal.

Flexible support packages (COVID provisions) cannot be used for the following purposes:

* illegal activity
* gambling
* products or services not identified in Family Action Plans, or for emergency material aid.
* free or low-cost services readily available within the community
* to replace or duplicate supports available through other funding sources (eg general case management).
* uses not directly related to Family Services

Flexible Packages will not be provided for goods or services that are not identified in the Child and Family Action Plan goals and activities or to replace or duplicate supports that are available through other funding sources such as:

* Family Violence Flexible Funding
* Local, State or Commonwealth programs (e.g. Safe at Home, Private Rental Access Programs).

All other funding options should be explored and exhausted prior to application (options previously utilised and explored should also be outlined in the application); see also **Attachment 1**; Alternative Funding Options.

Finally, goods are services sought in package applications should represent the most economical option available to ensure the greatest impact of funding use across the Bayside Peninsula Area.

Of high priority, is the funding of goods or services that maximise protective factors for children and young people, ensuring their safety and wellbeing and the minimisation of risk factors.

1. **Examples of Flexible Packages**

Some examples of how flexible packages might be applied are noted in the table below.

| **Concern** | **Flexible funding use** | **Outcome indicator** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Parents’ ability to safely transport the children to school | Pay for mechanical repair of the family car to get it operational, thus enabling the parents to drive the children to school. | Learning & Education |
| Hoarding and unsafe physical home environment | Hire of rubbish skip and a cleaner to clean and declutter the house, so that the children can live in and learn about the benefits of a physically safe and hygienic home environment. | Homes are suitable and stable |
| At risk of social isolation | Pay for registration fees to a sporting club or music lessons to improve a young person’s connection to community and reduce social isolation. | Social involvement / isolation |
| Parents’ alcohol and drug use impacting upon parenting capacity | Purchase specialist service – where wait lists for local drug and alcohol counselling are too long – to counsel and educate parents about managing drug use so as to improve parenting capability. | Alcohol and other drug use. |
| Child is suffering following a recent traumatic event | Purchase specialist trauma counselling – where this service is not available through Medicare via GP referral– to assist the child to manage their mental health. | Healing & growth following trauma |
| Lack of financial stability | Driving lessons to enable mother to drive a car to a place of employment. | Participate in employment and training |

Other examples of flexible funding use for goods and services include:

* childcare or respite costs
* specialist assessments for children or specialist interventions where these are not readily accessible
* assistance to meet dental costs or specific medical interventions for the child and family
* one-off payments to address immediate safety, stability and or wellbeing issues within the client’s home
* purchasing baby clothes, nursery and play equipment
* assistance with a utilities bill or purchasing material aid
* assistance with rental brokerage
* assistance with educational assessments, tutors, training or educational costs.

*\*\* Noting that goods or services sought should provide aim to provide enduring benefit to safety and wellbeing, rather than temporary relief.*

**Additional FSP (COVID provisions) include:**

* support with one off debt repayment
* rental arrears and utility bills
* food vouchers (excluding alcohol)

\*\* in this context of the COVID-19 pandemic, temporary relief is acceptable as long as longer term planning is engaged in with families, and they are aware that this funding not considered an ongoing option beyond the pandemic.

1. **Decision Making**

**5.1 Approval of Applications**

The Alliance Partnership Facilitator reviews and approves applications for Flexible Support Packages (COVID provisions) up to the Alliance agreed maximum package amount, *currently $1500.* Decisions are made according to these Guidelines.

Applications in excess of $1500, but not exceeding $2000, require secondary endorsement by the relevant agency Program Manager (or equivalent) in writing.

Applications in excess of $2000 require approval of the Deputy Chair of the Child and Family Services Alliance. This provides some independent oversight from the Facilitating Partner (Anglicare Victoria), of whom employs the Partnership Facilitator.

*The above financial decision making applies to single applications, as well as to subsequent applications. The financial value of a subsequent application is added to the previous approved package total and the indicative sum value is subject to the decision making.*

* 1. **Non-Approval of Applications**

Where the Partnership Facilitator makes a decision of non-approval regarding an application for Alliance Flexible Funding, this will communicated in writing to the Worker and agency Team Leader of equivalent. This communication will be accompanied by a rationale and will reference the Guidelines that have informed the decision making.

Agencies may seek to have a non-approval decision reviewed. In this case, the relevant Program Manager or equivalent will communicate this with the Partnership Facilitator and direct negotiation with occur. Dispute resolution processes are articulated in the Bayside Peninsula Child and Family Alliance Memorandum of Understanding.

**5.3 Guideline Decisions**

Flexible Funding decision making is the responsibility of the Management Group of the Bayside Peninsula Child and Family Services Alliance. Decision making utilises to consensus decision making model, as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding. The package amount is subject to review and decision making of this group, according to expenditure tracking throughout the financial year.

1. **Administration Process**

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| --- |
| **Application and Assessment Cycle - the process will operate on a weekly rotation, see below key days within a cycle.** |
| Flexible Packages will be received each week\*\* (noting change COVID response – *fortnightly to weekly*) |
| Flexible Package Applications (including all checklist documents) are to be sent to FS Alliance Inbox, fsalliance.bpa.@anglicarevic.org.au **by COB Monday**. |
| Partnership Facilitator will review applications; for both completeness of required documentation and appropriateness for access to Flexible Funding (against the Guidelines) **by COB Tuesday,**   * Complete and approved applications will be forwarded to Anglicare Administration. * Incomplete applications will be sent back to the Worker and agency approving Team Leader (or equivalent) for further information. *The re-submitted application or additional information will be assessed in the next assessment cycle.* * Where an applications is not approved, the Partnership Manager will communicate this decision in writing to the Worker and their approving Team Leader (or equivalent) |
|  |
|  |
| Admin will be notified **Wednesday AM** of approved applications. |
| Admin communicates decisions made by Partnership Manager with the Worker via email and initiates purchasing by **COB Friday** in the same week applications close. |
| Admin continues to communicate with Worker until the Package purchase is complete. |

**\*\*** *This system may be impacted by application demand, workers will be advised where delays in processing are experienced.*

1. **Terms & Conditions (as of February 2022)**
2. Agencies must remain “open” with the family for which they are applying for funding for the duration of the application process.
3. Agencies must not engage in the purchasing of goods and services until the application is approved (as per the Client Consent & Disclaimer Form).
4. The actual purchase amount for any goods must not exceed 10% of the approved package. If the purchase price has increased by more than 10% the alliance FSP administration team will communicate with the worker and the FSP request must be re-submitted.
5. Applications with incomplete documentation will be cancelled after a period of 21 days (from the date of receipt of application). The worker will be advised in writing and may re-apply at a later stage when all necessary documentation is available.
6. **Attachments**

Attachment 1 Alternative Funding Options

Attachment 2 BPA Child & Family Services Flexible Package Request Form

Attachment 3. Client Consent & Disclaimer Form

**Applications and Enquiries to be sent to:**

[**fsalliance.bpa@anglicarevic.org.au**](mailto:fsalliance.bpa@anglicarevic.org.au)

**Attachment 1: Alternative Funding Options for Children & Families:**

(In alphabetical order)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Organisation**  **/package type** | **Information** | **Contact information** |
| **Artists for Kids Culture** | Artists for Kids Culture provide funds for children aged from 5 years -18 years. Funds are provided for those experiencing hardship for: music, sport, art, cultural activities, camps and personal development. Scholarships are also available. | [www.akc.org.au](http://www.akc.org.au) |
| **Carer Gateway** | Carer Gateway provides many services to support carers in their caring role, including:   * [in-person and online peer support groups](https://www.carergateway.gov.au/about/peer-support-groups) * [tailored support packages](https://www.carergateway.gov.au/tailored-support-packages) to help with accessing planned respite, transport services, and more * [in-person and phone counselling](https://www.carergateway.gov.au/about/person-phone-counselling) * [in-person and online self-guided coaching](https://coaching.carergateway.gov.au/) * [online skills courses](https://skills.carergateway.gov.au/) to support your wellbeing and understanding of legal responsibilities relating to the caring role * [access to emergency respite](https://www.carergateway.gov.au/respite) if you suddenly find you can’t provide care, for example if you become ill or injured. | <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/> |
| **Camps, Sports & Excursion Fund** | The Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF) is means tested or available to concession card holders to help families cover the costs of camps etc. It is paid to the school and you apply via a form to the school that can be downloaded via www.education.vic.gov.au/csef. This funding is $125.00 for primary students and $225 for secondary school children. | <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/csef.aspx> |
| **Community Support Frankston** |  | <http://www.frankston.net/> |
| **Commonwealth Bank Domestic & Family Violence Assistance Program** | If you are an eligible CBA customer you can access our Domestic & Family Violence Assistance Program to support you and your family experiencing a domestic or family violence situation. | <https://www.commbank.com.au/support/dv-assistance.html> |
| **Escaping Violence Program (EVP)** | The Escaping Violence Payment (EVP) offers financial assistance and confidential support to help people move forward and set up a home that’s free from violence. The violence can be: · Physically, verbally or sexually abusive · Emotionally, spiritually or psychologically abusive · Economically abusive · Threatening, coercive, or seeking to control or dominate the other person | [Escaping Violence Program - SouthSafe](https://southsafe.com.au/funding/escaping-violence-program/) |
| **Family Violence FSPs** | Guidelines and Application form available on the SouthSafe website. | <https://southsafe.com.au/bayside-peninsula-flexible-support-packages/> |
| **Good Shepherd Microfinance** | Good Shepherd Microfinance has a range of financial programs and loans that you may be eligible for that assist with education and other expenses, including help for IT equipment. | [www.goodshepherdmicrofinance.org.au](http://www.goodshepherdmicrofinance.org.au) |
| **Mums Supporting Families in Need (MSFIN)** | MSFIN provides new and quality second hand material aid such as cots, bassinets, car seats and prams for babies; clothing, shoes, linen, non-perishable food and toiletries for all ages as well as nappies & wipes and other baby essentials to families in circumstantial crisis. | <https://www.msfin.org.au/> |
| **NAB Domestic and Family Violence Assistance Grants** | Offering Domestic and Family Violence Assistance Grants and managing current financial arrangements. | <https://www.nab.com.au/about-us/social-impact/customers/domestic-and-family-violence/experiencing-domestic-violence> |
| **Saver Plus - Brotherhood of St Laurence and ANZ** | The Saver Plus program can help you save enough money for educational costs. The program will help you save $500 over 10 months and then match this dollar for dollar to spend on educational items. The program involves education sessions on finances, which give you tips on how to make savings. | [www.bsl.org.au](http://www.bsl.org.au) |
| **Statewide Children’s Resource Program** | Funded by the Department of Health and Human Services to assist, support, and resource homelessness and other non-government services to respond more effectively to the needs of children who have experienced homelessness and/or family violence; including provision of brokerage. $300 per child, can be accessed six monthly. | <http://statewidechildrenresourceprogram.weebly.com/>  Contact: 03 8626 5506 |
| **State Schools’ Relief (SSR)** | Available for children at public schools only. Accessed via the principal or wellbeing coordinator/chaplain only. Includes: Uniforms, graphing calculators and steel capped work boots for senior students.  The SSR program provides: uniforms, sports uniforms, socks, underwear and foot wear to children who are primary or secondary students attending public schools and whose families may be experiencing disadvantage and are unable to afford to pay for those items themselves. There is no criteria for this program and a concession card is not required. | [www.ssr.net.au/schools](http://www.ssr.net.au/schools) |
| **St Kilda Mums** | Receive requests from Maternal and Child Health Nurses and social workers on behalf of families in need. We then try to meet or exceed each request by providing those families with quality pre-loved donations. | <https://www.stkildamums.org/> |
| **St Vincent de Paul Society** | St Vincent de Paul may be able to help in two areas:   1. The St Vincent de Paul Society also offers people assistance through home visits. This support may include providing food or food vouchers, clothing, furniture, budget support, assistance with utility bills or back to school costs, information and advocacy. 2. Material assistance through its network of Vinnies Centres. Vinnies Centres are able to provide (depending upon supply) a variety of goods including furniture, clothing and household goods to families and people who are in need. | [www.vinnies.org.au](http://www.vinnies.org.au)  (search ‘Find Help’) |
| **The Smith Family – Learning for Life Program** | The Smith Family offers a Learning for Life program to students facing disadvantage. To be eligible, your child would need to attend a school in which The Smith Family works and you would need to contact your school’s principal who may be able to refer you. There are very limited scholarships available. | [www.thesmithfamily.com.au](http://www.thesmithfamily.com.au) |
| **The Queens Fund** | The Queen’s Fund provides financial assistance to single, Victorian women and their children who are in crisis, distress or emergency situations. Appliances/electronics and storage. $325 maximum limit. | <https://www.queensfund.org.au/howtoapply> |
| **VOCAT** | A person may apply for financial assistance if:   * a violent crime was committed against them and they have suffered an injury * the crime occurred in Victoria * they are a primary, secondary or related victim of that violent crime as defined by the Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996, or a person who has incurred funeral expenses as a direct result of the death of a primary victim. | <https://www.vocat.vic.gov.au/> |