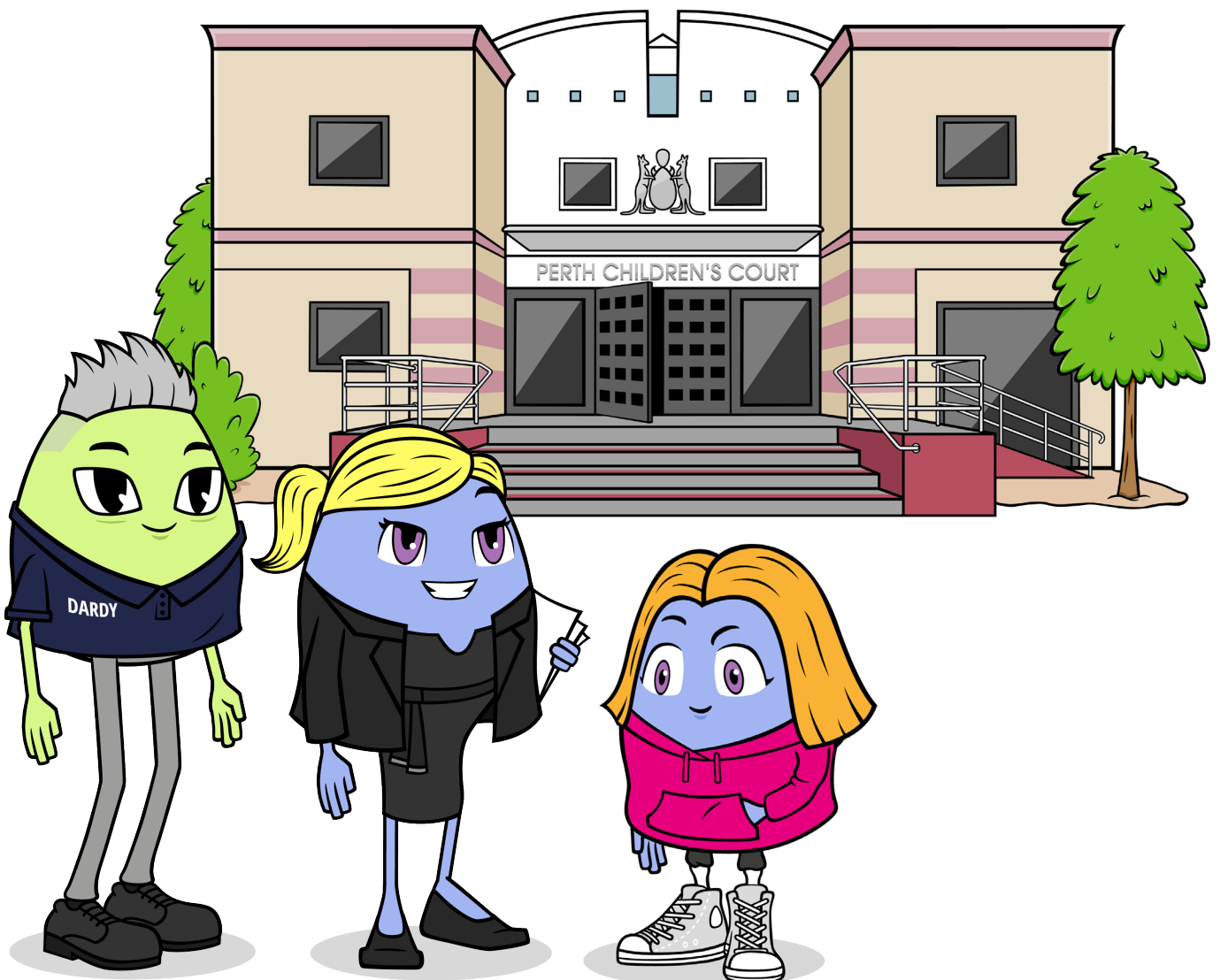


EVALUATION REPORT

THE DARDY PROJECT



July 1 2024 - October 31 2025

Document title	Evaluation Report: The DARDY project
Project name	Disability Advocacy and Referral Diversion for Young people (DARDY)
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Evaluation and report contributors

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The 'egg' themed justice characters and scenes that enable visual reporting were envisaged by Jane Stewart and created by Rob Lee (Robotoon). These characters were focus-tested with DARDY participants for use in legal education resources.

A special thank you to Lisette Kaleveld (Evaluation Consultant, Legal Aid WA) for providing valuable input into the evaluation data collection instruments and conducting stakeholder interviews.

THE DARDY PROJECT

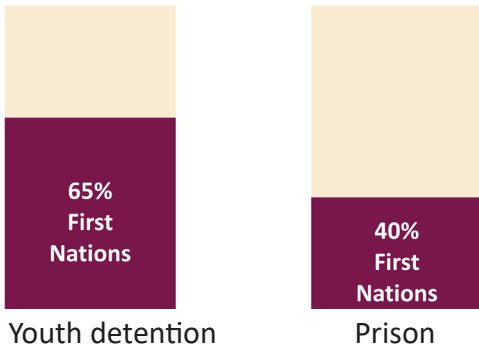
Evaluation Summary for Closing the Gap 2024-25



What is the need for the project?

2032 young people aged 10-25 were in detention or prison in Western Australia in 2024

Proportion of First Nations people 10-25 years in detention and prison



Proportion of youth in detention with a developmental disability



Young people with developmental disability entering the criminal justice system who also have a mental health issue



First Nations youth in detention

3 times more likely to have a developmental disability compared to other youth

Social issues contributing to justice contact: Intergenerational trauma, poverty, poor educational opportunities, violence, abuse, racism, inadequate healthcare, homelessness.

Who did the DARDY project support?

85 clients were provided legal and social support services and an additional **168** were provided legal services

Supporting First Nations clients

52% of DARDY clients identified as First Nations compared to **30%** of Legal Aid WA clients overall

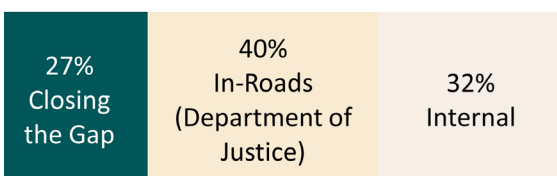
Supporting clients with disability

99% of DARDY clients had a cognitive disability or mental illness and most experienced two or more compared to **37%** of Legal Aid WA clients overall

“Despite the fact that [the client] is someone who, when you talk to him for even a few minutes, you can see that he has a lot of complexities that were never explored...The period of time he has had unmedicated due to his circumstances in custody, combined with childhood trauma has had an impact on his cognitive functioning that's irreversible.”

DARDY case lawyer

Costs



Total operational costs 24/25 of **1.30 million**

1.56M

is the average annual cost of youth detention in WA. The annual cost of adult imprisonment is \$137,605

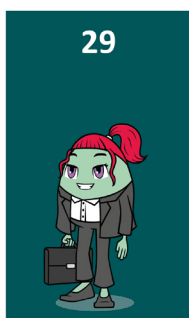


How did the DARDY project provide service to clients?



253 DARDY clients in total in 2024-25

85 DARDY clients supported by a social support worker and a lawyer



Inhouse lawyer



Duty lawyer



External lawyer

168 Clients were supported by a DARDY lawyer only



Inhouse lawyer



Duty lawyer

Activities supporting client service delivery

69 stakeholder engagement meetings

165 hours spent connecting and collaborating with stakeholders across a diversity of sectors, including - disability, health, education, employment and housing



38% of core DARDY staff are First Nations

17 training sessions attended by staff (Feb-Oct 2025), including 5 about developmental disabilities and 4 in cultural competency

Pre/post assessments show significant increase in staff knowledge, skills and confidence in working with clients

What difference did the DARDY project make?

The DARDY team helps First Nations children and young people with developmental disabilities achieve better personal and legal outcomes. The team is responsive, adaptive, and always take a person-centred approach. Client work is enhanced by improving sector relationships and the court environment.

Improved sector relationships

The social support workers build relationships across sectors supporting the continuity of client support with service providers having a central point of contact, critical for client progress.

“The [DARDY social support worker] provided that central point of contact for [the client’s] mum because she was becoming quite overwhelmed with how many services were contacting her...that was extremely helpful for [the] mum.

Stakeholder (Education)

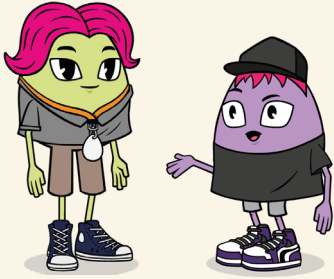
A better supported court environment

The presence of DARDY social support workers and lawyers in court has a positive impact through:

- Influence on client behaviour
- Knowledge about the clients’ contexts
- Role modelling respectful court behaviour
- Ability to step-in as the duty lawyer based on their consistent presence in court.

“The [DARDY] lawyers know each of the kids...When their grant lawyers don’t turn up, it’s the DARDY lawyers that appear for the young people. *Magistrate*

Better personal and legal outcomes for children and young people with developmental disabilities



Relational trust

develops over time through perseverance, consistency and flexibility, especially with the social support worker, the client and their family



“ When I was doing crime [before] it never felt like I was disappointing anyone...But when I got charged with stealing and [the DARDY social support worker] found out about it, it made me feel like I was disappointing people you know. So it’s starting to snap me out from doing it...It feels like a second family basically...that disappointment feeling man, that’s a feeling I don’t like.

Client, 15 yrs

A stabilised immediate environment is critical for long-term support connections and reduced offending.

“ I had absolutely no support ... I was between being homeless and living in my car ...I am able to call and [the DARDY worker] helps with everything you would need in life as a person with intellectual and physical disabilities. Client, 20 yrs

Disability diagnosis For most clients this is their first opportunity to get a disability or mental illness diagnosis.

“ Its obviously bad that [my client] had to come into the justice system in order to get NDIS and her neuropsych done. But realistically it wouldn’t have happened if she didn’t get picked up with charges. DARDY support worker

Legal process that reflects social and disability context of offending is achieved by progressing a disability diagnosis, increased court understanding of the context of offending and improved client legal understanding.

“ I didn’t want to come to court.. [Now] my mindset on court has changed. Client, 20 yrs

Client engagement with longer term supports is reinforced through persistent, consistent and long-term guidance.

“ DARDY have been fantastic at building that relationship with the young people, so it feels safe to go to places with them and attend appointments, attend school and stuff. Stakeholder

Access to disability and other supports requires a substantive amount of work to guide the client in the NDIS application process and navigate other supports that are needed.

“ After finally getting a diagnosis of intellectual disability, [the client] is understanding himself so much better and getting the supports put in place. DARDY lawyer

Increased community functioning You’re lucky, as I say, in a sense, that you have now found an answer to your problems, and the answer is that there is a way to deal with your problems, and that is through appropriate mental health strategies, medication and the very enormous assistance you’ve received from [DARDY] Judge speaking to client

Increased hope for the future first depends on the outcomes in the six boxes above, takes time and is not a smooth path.

“ I want to go back to work so I am looking for a job... then getting a licence so I am driving my family around and that. Client 19 yrs

Better personal outcomes including improvement in family relationships and health are evidenced over time.

“ Me and [my sister] used to argue bad, but it’s getting better. ‘Cause when they take us out and stuff it gives me and my little sister time to talk. Client, 15 yrs

Better legal outcomes and reduced offending From the perspective across the course of [the client’s] life, assuming she stays on this trajectory, [DARDY] may well have assisted in preventing literally hundreds of violent and theft-based offences. Private lawyer of DARDY client



Project recommendations

Merit and worth

The qualitative data provides evidence of client outcomes that are necessary for reduced offending and Closing the Gap targets including that Aboriginal children and young people:

- Are healthy and strong
- Engage in education and employment
- Are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system.

The annual project cost is less than the cost of detention of one young person for a year. Most significant is the value of supporting the rights of the child, the wellbeing of families and the safety of Western Australian communities.

Success factors

Key features of the unique project model that contribute to its success include:

- A close partnership between lawyers and social support workers
- The consistency and flexibility of support for clients and their families
- Ability to work with young people with complex needs using a strength-based, relational approach
- Sector relationship building facilitating a client-centred approach
- Quality and diversity of the project team.

Room for improvement

Considerations for improving the project and future evaluation include:

- Clarification and communication of the project to stakeholders
- Proactively supporting the wellbeing of the project staff
- Improved quantitative data collection internally and increased access to crime data to support the qualitative evidence of reduced youth offending
- Advocating for improved client mental health supports.

How was the evaluation done?

The DARDY project was evaluated by the Legal Aid WA evaluation consultant using a client-centred evaluation approach and mixed methods. The evaluation findings are based on quantitative data from the Legal Aid WA client record database and qualitative data collected between November 2024 and September 2025.

The table provides a summary of the qualitative data collected.

	DARDY clients		Stakeholders			DARDY staff	
	Participated	Notes	Invited	Participated	Notes	Participated	Notes
Interviews	6	3 female 3 male	15	10	Includes legal, education, health, disability	4	Includes 4 Support workers, 3 lawyers
Focus groups						9	
Total (people)	6		15	10		11	

- Client interviews were conducted by a team of four First Nation's staff who were trained in in-depth interviewing by the internal evaluator and introduced to the clients by the social support workers. Each client interview lasted between 20 and 35 minutes and was recorded and fully transcribed.
- Stakeholder interviews were conducted by the internal evaluator on Teams. The automatic transcription was corrected by the interviewer. Stakeholder interviews were approximately 30-minutes in duration.
- Teams and in-person interviews and discussions were conducted with DARDY staff over the 10 month period. Staff interviews were focused on client-experiences of the project.
- The qualitative data was analysed for content and themes.
- Quantative data was cross-checked for errors with staff and descriptive analysis completed in Excel.

Introduction and overview

About the DARDY project

The Disability Advocacy and Referral Diversion for Young people (DARDY) project provides combined legal and social support to young people, aged 10 to 25, with a developmental disability¹, who have had interactions with the criminal justice system. DARDY commenced in September 2022 with one lawyer. The project since then has expanded to a team of four lawyers and four social support workers. These staff deliver holistic support to young people with suspected developmental disabilities and their families through the court process. Many of the clients are Aboriginal.

Two of the lawyers primarily undertake case work under a grant of legal aid and represent young people aged up to 25, including participants in the Intellectual Disability Diversion program in the Perth Magistrates Court. The other two lawyers are focused on representing young people in the Perth Children's Court who have been referred to participate in the In-Roads therapeutic court. These lawyers provide primarily duty lawyer services. Young people aged 10-17 who are facing criminal charges and at risk of being sentenced to a term of immediate detention may be referred to participate in In-Roads. In-Roads clients are case managed by a Magistrate while intensive supports and interventions are put in place through the Health Navigator Program, Target 120 Plus and the Department of Education.

The social support workers assist young people under 25 with a disability across both the adult and children's jurisdictions, including participants in the In-Roads and Drug Court therapeutic courts in the Perth Children's Court. They connect these young people with long-term support from disability and other services (e.g., health, housing, education and employment) and work closely with Legal Aid WA's NDIS Early Advice Service. The social support workers provide intensive case management and may continue to support a young person after their criminal matters have been resolved to ensure long term positive outcomes.

The DARDY project currently operates under three funding sources: Internally through Legal Aid WA, Closing the Gap (WA Treasury) and In-Roads (Department of Justice).

DARDY project work is guided by principles of client (and family) centredness, cultural safety, strength-based, child-safe and trauma-informed approaches (Stewart, 2024).

¹ The term 'young person with a developmental disability' is used throughout this document. Other terms used include 'person or people with cognitive disability and learning delays' or 'person or people with intellectual disability' and 'person or people with learning disability' consistent with the suggested language use described in the PWDA Language Guide: A guide to language about disability (People with Disability Australia, 2021)

The need for the DARDY project

There is a substantial number of young people with developmental disabilities in the criminal justice system, and a critical overrepresentation. In the financial year 2023-24, 2032 young people (aged 10-25) spent time in detention or prison (AIHW, 2025; ABS, 2024). In the same year in Western Australia, 6278 children aged 10 to 17 were proceeded against by police (ABS, 2025). In a representative study of young people aged between 10 and 17 years in Detention in Western Australia (WA) in 2015-2016, 89% (88 of 99) were found to have at least one domain of severe neurodevelopmental impairment, including a 36% prevalence (36 of 99) of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) (Bower et al., 2018). Most of the young people were First Nations² (74%). Other studies have shown that there is a greater proportion of First Nations people with cognitive disability in custody. For example, one in four First Nations young people aged 14 to 21 in detention were estimated to have a developmental disability compared to one in 12 non-Indigenous young people (Disability Royal Commission, 2023).

Young people with developmental disabilities are more likely to be dealing with multiple social issues, which increase their chances of encountering the criminal justice system. The social determinants driving contact with the justice system include poverty, intergenerational trauma, violence and abuse, racism, homelessness, poor educational opportunities and inadequate healthcare (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2024; Disability Royal Commission, 2023). In addition, at least 40% of young people with developmental disabilities entering the criminal justice system will also be experiencing mental health issues (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019).

According to the Disability Royal Commission (Disability Royal Commission, 2023), young people with disability who enter the justice system:

- Are more likely to have difficulty coping with the prison environment
- Experience a higher rate of comorbid mental health disorders and physical conditions
- Are at increased risk of being disadvantaged and socially isolated
- Have a higher risk of returning to custody.

A successful response to the disproportion of young people with developmental disabilities in the criminal justice system almost certainly requires diagnosing and providing tailored support for their disabilities and social disadvantage. A key part of this response is facilitating access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) to support their functioning in the community. Young people with cognitive and learning disabilities require additional time and support so they can

² The terms First Nations, Aboriginal and Indigenous are used interchangeably in this Plan. We recognise these terms do not always reflect the diversity of an individual's cultures and identities, or preferred naming conventions.

understand and fully engage in court processes and engage meaningfully in their own choices for the future.

Western Australia has seen little change in Aboriginal adult detention rates between 2019 and 2023. There has been a positive trend for Aboriginal youth in WA over the same time with detention rates decreasing from 57 to 30 per 10,000. However, WA has the third-highest rate of Aboriginal youth detention (behind Northern Territory and Queensland) in Australia (AIHW, 2023).

With the high proportion of Aboriginal youth and adults in detention with developmental disabilities, often undiagnosed, interventions facilitating the identification of disability and supporting young people to access and effectively use appropriate legal, disability, health, cultural and social support have never been more critical.

The evaluation

Evaluation objectives

Legal Aid WA internally evaluated the DARDY project to achieve two main objectives.

1. Evidence the role of DARDY in:
 - a. Addressing the needs of young people with developmental disabilities and their families to:
 - understand and engage with legal processes and justice services
 - access disability and other support services.
 - b. Increasing collaboration between youth justice and disability, community, education and other sectors.
 - c. Contributing to better legal outcomes and reduced offending of young people with developmental disabilities.
2. Investigate DARDY project processes, including the guiding principles and identify:
 - a. Project strengths, challenges and improvements
 - b. Critical aspects of the model for informing future projects in Western Australia and other states and territories of Australia.

Closing the Gap evaluation

The specific Closing the Gap evaluation has a focus on the First Nations participants of the DARDY program, currently comprising approximately 52% of project participants³. For this component, the evaluation purpose and questions refer to the experience of First Nations participants and will incorporate their specific context and experience.

³ Based on 2024-25 financial year data for DARDY – 44 of 85 clients identified as First Nations.

Key evaluation questions

Four major questions are explored in the evaluation of the DARDY project:

1. Does the DARDY project contribute to better personal and legal outcomes for clients?
Including:
 - a. Increase in relational trust
 - b. Increased capability to understand their legal situation
 - c. Access to disability diagnosis and support
 - d. Improved community functioning
 - e. Increased hope for the future
 - f. Better legal outcomes
 - g. Reduced offending.
2. Does the DARDY project contribute to improved collaboration between the legal, disability and other support services (including health, housing, education and employment)?
3. What are the key components of the DARDY project model that contribute to its success?
4. What changes need to be made to the DARDY project to improve its effectiveness?

Intended audiences and use

The intended audiences and use of this evaluation report are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: The intended priority audiences and use of the DARDY evaluation

Audience	Role	Use
Closing the Gap, WA Treasury	Funder (2024-2026) ⁴ First Nations focus	Decision-making for funding and project support
WA Department of Justice	Ongoing support of Legal Aid WA	Decision-making for funding and project support
Legal Aid WA Directorate	Funding and other support	Decision-making for funding and project support
DARDY project staff	Delivery of the project	Project learning and improvement
WA Courts	Ongoing support for the project presence	Decision-making for project support

The DARDY program logic is shown in Figure 1 on the following page. The outcomes of focus for evidencing in the DARDY evaluation are shaded grey. The DARDY theory of change model is shown in Appendix 1.

⁴ With possible extension of three years funding (2026-2029)

Figure 1: Program Logic for the DARDY project evaluation

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short term (ST) outcomes	Medium term (MT) outcomes	Long term (LT) outcomes	
Funding Closing the Gap (CtG) WA Treasury Legal Aid WA <i>(until 30 June 2026)</i>	Legal representation • DARDY • LAWA (not DARDY) • Private practitioners with Grant of Legal Aid	No. of legal services provided • DARDY legal services • Grants of legal aid • Other legal services (duty lawyer, legal advice, legal task) No. of young people provided legal services	Clients access client-centred legal support	Potential role of disabilities in client offending acknowledged	Legal process better reflects the social and disability context of offending	
			Interaction enables clients to make informed legal decisions	Appropriate court reports completed	Client engages in disability and other support services	
			Clients receive user-friendly information about the law and their legal situation	Understanding of individual's functioning through disability and social assessment	Increased functioning in the community (including education/employment)	
	Legal staff In-house legal staff CtG • 1 SCL 3 lawyer <i>In-Roads</i> • 1 SCL 3 lawyer • 1 SCL 1/2 lawyer <i>Internal</i> • 1 SCL 3 lawyer	Case management and Information provision and education	• No. of clients case-managed • No. of referrals • No. of Community Legal Education sessions • No. referred to NDIS/ No. granted access	Clients respond positively to the information provided	Clients have improved capability to understand their legal situation	Increased wellbeing
				Clients and families engage with DARDY social supports	Increased engagement with legal processes and justice services	Increased positive social connections
				Authentic connection between staff and clients	Clients and social support worker collaboratively agree to a set of objectives	Increased hope for the future
	Social support workers CtG • 1 L5 SSW <i>In-Roads</i> • 1 L5 SSWs <i>Internal</i> • 2 L5 SSWs	Strategic collaboration • Disability support services • Other support services (e.g. health, education)	• No. of stakeholder engagement sessions • No and type of stakeholder collaborations	Support needs identified (e.g. disability, housing, mental health)	Access to appropriate disability and other support services	Increased culture of collaboration
				Families are supported	Increased relational trust between staff and client	Streamlined codesigned referral pathways
				Key services delivery partners are identified	Increased collaboration between disability sector, youth justice and others	Tailored and flexible services for clients and families
	Project staff • 0.3 level 5 Coordinator • 0.6 level 1 Admin	Staff capability building • Training • Professional development	• No. of inhouse training sessions provided • No. of external training/professional development sessions attended • No. of staff attending training • No. of stakeholder legal service providers trained	Key services delivery partners are engaged	Increase confidence and skills for supporting young neurodiverse cognitively disabled people	Ultimate outcomes Reduced offending Better legal outcomes Reduced likelihood of imprisonment
				Staff are provided with learning opportunities		
				Staff recognise diverse issues affecting young people in the criminal justice system		
Government agencies Perth Childrens Court Community corrections NDIS Justice liason officers						
Brokerage fund - 30K						

How the evaluation was done – The method

The DARDY project was evaluated internally by a Legal Aid WA evaluation consultant using a client-centred, utilisation-focused evaluation approach (Patton, 2022) and mixed methods. The evaluation focuses on quantitative data for the 2024-2025 financial year and on qualitative data collected between November 2024 and September 2025.

Quantitative methods

Quantitative methods included:

- Analysis of the client record database
- Collection and review of DARDY intake and closure forms (administered from January 2025)
- Review of the visual tool administration results (social support and hope for the future) collected by social support workers from April 2025
See Appendix 2 for a sample of a completed visual tool.
- DARDY staff knowledge and skills pre and post online survey.
The staff survey instrument is provided in Appendix 3

Qualitative methods

Qualitative methods included:

- Client interviews conducted by a team of four internal First Nation’s interviewers trained in interviewing methods, introduced to the client by their social support worker, recorded and transcribed. Each client interview was between 20 and 35 minutes in duration.
The interview guide for clients is provided in Appendix 4
- Stakeholder interviews conducted by two internal Evaluation consultants on Microsoft Teams, automatically transcribed, with the transcript reviewed and corrected by the interviewer. Stakeholder interviews were around 30 minutes in duration.
The interview guide for stakeholders is provided in Appendix 5.
- Teams interviews with DARDY social support workers and DARDY lawyers with a focus on specific client experiences of the DARDY project.

Sample

The final sample on which the analysis and findings are based is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Final sample for the DARDY evaluation

Method	DARDY clients		Stakeholders			DARDY staff		
	Participated	Notes	Invited	Participated	Notes	Invited	Participated	Notes
Interviews	6	3 female 3 male	15	10	Includes: Legal, education, health, disability	4	4	Includes: 4 support workers, 3 lawyers
Group discussion						9	9	
Survey						10	7	10 did pre- survey only
Client database	85	For demographic data						
TOTAL	6		15	10		11	11	Total staff

Analysis

Data was triangulated by source (i.e., client, stakeholder, staff member) and method (interview and group discussion for staff). All interview data was combined and analysed for content and themes by the evaluation consultant.

The client narratives were developed by combined analysis of:

- Three client interview transcripts
- Transcripts and notes of interviews and group discussions gleaning DARDY lawyer and social support worker perspectives on the specific experiences of the three clients
- Stakeholder interview transcripts that provided an additional perspective on the specific client experience
- Review of images of client visual tool completion.

Method limitations

Evidence of DARDY outcomes is based on qualitative data. Quantitative data supporting short- and medium-term outcomes were not available. Although client intake and closure forms were developed and implemented for the project (*see Appendix 6*), the duration of

average client service is greater than 12 months. As a result, clients had either an intake form or a closure form completed, but not both. In addition, these forms were not completed for all clients. At the mid-point of the evaluation period (December 2024), Legal Aid WA transitioned to a new Client Relationship Management (CRM) system, which resulted in an additional data-entry burden for staff. Furthermore, the intake of most clients participating in the evaluation interviews was pre-2025.

Department of Justice eCourt data was identified as an important method for determining a decrease in the number of occasions and the seriousness of client offending. However, recent changes to the rules governing access to this data reduced the data's availability for use in the evaluation.

The rigour of the qualitative data was strengthened through methodological triangulation, including the method, the interviewer, and the participant. However, only the evaluation consultant completed the qualitative analysis, limiting the rigour of analysis. To address this limitation, the client stories and findings from the qualitative study were shared with DARDY and evaluation staff for a sense-check and feedback.

What the evaluation found – The results

The findings addressing the evaluation questions are presented in the following sections. Table 3 maps the results sections to the evaluation questions and the Closing the Gap targets.

Table 3: Evaluation results aligned to evaluation questions and Closing the Gap targets

Finding section	Evaluation questions	Closing the Gap relevance
A. How did the DARDY project provide service?	What type of service is provided? How many young people participate? How many First Nations young people participate? How much did the service cost?	Support for First Nations young people in the criminal justice system. Value for investment.
B. Client stories – Experience of the DARDY project	Does participation in DARDY result in better personal and legal outcomes for young people? What is the young people’s experience of the DARDY project?	Achievement of Closing the Gap outcomes, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -health and social and emotional wellbeing, -reaching full learning potential, -engagement in employment -safety -reducing overrepresentation in the criminal justice system

Finding section	Evaluation questions	Closing the Gap relevance
		-access to information and services to make informed decisions.
C. Project outcomes – The difference DARDY makes	<p>Does participation in DARDY result in better personal and legal outcomes for young people?</p> <p>What is the pathway of short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes experienced by DARDY clients?</p> <p>How does the DARDY project contribute to improved across-sector client work?</p> <p>How does the DARDY project contribute to an improved court environment?</p>	As above in B.
D. Strengths of the project model	What are the essential project components that contribute to positive client outcomes?	Learnings about what works for ‘Closing the Gap’
E. Capability of the project team	<p>Have staff increased their knowledge and skills in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -working with young people with developmental disabilities -collaborating across sectors 	Sustainability of the project
E. Project limitations	<p>What are the major challenges experienced by the project?</p> <p>How could the project be improved?</p>	Improved future value
F. Judgement of the merit and worth of the project	<p>Is DARDY worth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -continuing -expanding? <p>Is DARDY of value to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -clients and their families -stakeholders -courts -the broader community? <p>Is DARDY value for money?</p>	Current and continued contribution to achieving Closing the Gap targets

A. How the DARDY project provided service to clients

In the 2024-25 financial year, a total of 271 clients received services from the DARDY project. This included 85 clients who were supported by a partnership between one of the four DARDY social support workers and a lawyer. As shown in Table 4, approximately a third of these clients (29/85), were supported by both a DARDY social support worker and a DARDY lawyer. An additional 43 clients were provided a DARDY lawyer, and 125 clients were supported by a DARDY lawyer providing duty lawyer services, primarily at the In-Roads and Children’s Drug Courts.

Table 4: Support provided to clients by the DARDY project

Type of legal service provided	Clients supported by DARDY social support worker and a lawyer	Clients supported by a DARDY lawyer only
DARDY In-house lawyer	29 (34%)	44 (26%)
DARDY duty lawyer	23 (27%)	124 (74%)
External lawyer	33 (39%)	-
TOTAL	85 (100%)	168 (100%)

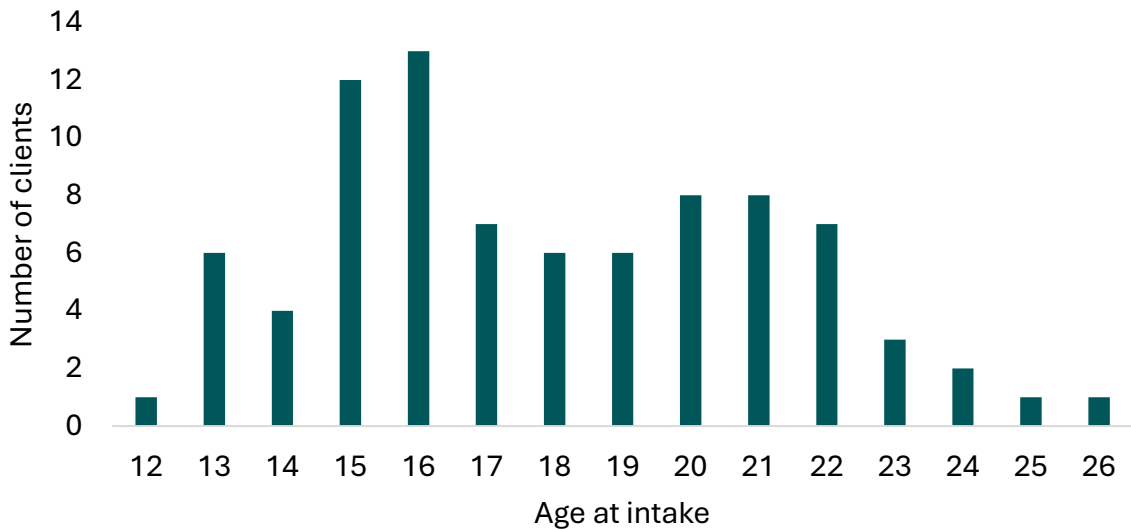
The demographics of the 85 clients participating in the combined legal and social support services provided by DARDY are shown in Table 5 and Figure 2 below.

Table 5: Demographic profile of clients participating in DARDY social supports (n=85)

First Nations	Yes	44 (52%)
	No	39 (46%)
	Unknown	2 (2%)
Gender	Male	66 (78%)
	Female	18 (21%)
	Non-binary	1 (1%)
Disability	Yes	84 (99%)
	No	1 (1%)

Family violence	Yes	36 (42%)
	No	39 (46%)
	Unknown	9 (12%)

Figure 2: Age of clients participating in DARDY social supports (n=85)



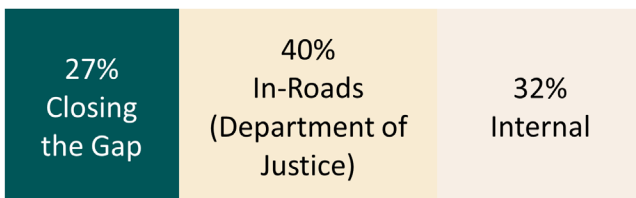
More than half of DARDY clients were children aged 17 or younger (n=43).

How much did the service cost?

Total funding for the DARDY project for the 2024-25 financial year was 1.47 million. Funding by source is shown in Figure 3 below.

The average annual equivalent cost of one youth detention in Western Australia is 1.56 million. The average annual cost of adult imprisonment in Western Australia is \$137,605 (Department of Justice, 2025).

Figure 3: DARDY project funding contribution, financial year 2024-25



B. Client stories - Experiences with the DARDY project

The experience of DARDY clients is described using the stories of three clients⁵. The narratives are built on client, staff and stakeholder interviews. These stories, together with thematic analysis of the combined interview data, highlight the difference the DARDY project makes from the clients' perspective.

Olivia



Olivia is 22 years old. She was 20 when she encountered the DARDY project. Olivia was charged with serious assault. It was her first offence. However, the nature of the assault meant that without legal assistance and negotiations, it would have resulted in a mandatory prison sentence.

It was unknown at the time of the charge but later revealed that Olivia had been the victim of an attempted murder a couple of months before the assault from which she suffered major head injuries. Olivia had a complex childhood trauma history that included sexual abuse and had undiagnosed autism spectrum disorder. She was living alone in a caravan.

Rhett

Rhett is a 20-year-old First Nations man and father of two young children. He was 17 when he engaged with the DARDY project. He had an existing diagnosis of a mild intellectual disability and neuropsychological condition. Rhett also had a suspected brain injury and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). He had used drugs and alcohol from his early teens and had multiple charges including drug possession and burglary. He had been detained at Banksia Hill on several occasions and then imprisoned at Hakea. Rhett has a supportive partner, Lily, and had been living with Lily and the children at his mother-in-law's house.



Harper



Harper is a 15-year-old girl who lives with her father and younger sister. She was 14 when she first had contact with a DARDY social support worker. Harper's early home life was complex. She experienced years of family violence and sexual assault. Harper has ADHD and post-traumatic stress disorder. She was moved from her mother, who lived in a regional town, to Perth when she was still in primary school. She experienced bullying, made some bad connections and started committing crime. Over just a few years of her early teens, Harper had been involved in more than 50 violent and theft-based offences.

⁵ Pseudonyms are used for clients in all stories and quotes.

Olivia's story – There is often much more to the client than is initially known



When Olivia first engaged with one of the DARDY lawyers, the lawyer realised very quickly that there was much more to Olivia's story than was known. The DARDY lawyer was able to support disability diagnoses and provide the justice system with an understanding of the social and disability context of Olivia's offending. She referred Olivia to one of the DARDY social support workers. It took Olivia several weeks to engage with the DARDY social support worker.

Once she did, the trust was built over 18 months through consistent relational support. The social support worker connected Olivia to health, disability and housing services. At the same time, she continued to support Olivia with her legal situation, including getting confirmed diagnoses of autism and acquired brain injury. Looking back, Olivia describes the support she experienced from the DARDY project:

[The DARDY lawyer and social support worker] are always together. [The lawyer] is amazing. [The social support worker] has been able to step up in that different more physical way. But [the lawyer] is to do with the courts and she's stepped up so much, she's helped me with emotional safety and I'm trying to think of the word, the okayness. "It's going to be okay, everything is okay, you're doing a good job". She has always been reassuring me the whole time... It's just been my concrete... It's a very emotional thing because they've seen me in my worst states and they've supported me in the little ways, the big ways, every way I have needed. They've taken that personal time out and it's been like [Olivia] this is what we're doing. It's a very home feeling. They're very good like that...All the help they've offered and they've kept their word...

Eighteen months after her first contact with the DARDY lawyer, Olivia's NDIS application has now been accepted, and she is currently waiting for the support coordinator to get in contact. Olivia reflects on how her life is now compared to before the DARDY team supported her:

So, it's an extreme difference so it's yeah from feeling like I'm going to be on the streets for my whole life like there was no hope of getting study like being able to do study or get a job. Or reconnect with anyone in any kind of emotional way, or get through the courts. I thought I was going to be locked up. I thought I was going to be stuck on drugs for the rest of my life. Either that or I was going to die from drugs in my system or killing myself through something reckless because of the mindset I was in. Those days still flash through, but it's changed from that to 'I am going to get somewhere to live somewhere stable to live and it's going to be comfortable and I'm going to be able to do study and work and move on to the career I've dreamed of'...I'm going to be able to do my therapies and work through my deep traumas through my childhood and work through that get medicated in the right way, get my brain

stable so I can be happier living life rather than dealing with life. They've given me hope and faith that the hope is real, that it's worth it, it's worth hoping. Because it's going to happen it's a matter of time.

Rhett's story – The pathway to positive client outcomes can be long and 'bumpy'



Rhett first engaged with the DARDY project when he was 17. He was referred to DARDY from the Perth Children's Court Drug Court shortly before he was due to graduate. At that time, he engaged briefly with a DARDY social support worker and a DARDY children's lawyer. The DARDY social support worker supported Rhett with an NDIS application. At the same time, he had started to get regular weekly counselling and support for reducing his substance use from an Aboriginal counselling organisation. The DARDY social support worker provided Rhett with a mobile phone so she could contact him and told him she would reach out the next day. However, when the social support worker called Rhett's mobile the next day, Rhett's partner, Lily, answered and told her about the situation.

Rhett had turned 18 the evening after he graduated from the Perth Children's Court Drug Court, committed new offences and was imprisoned in an adult jail. He spent six weeks in custody on remand. As soon as the DARDY social support worker was told of Rhett's situation, she booked an urgent Teams appointment with Rhett at the prison. Rhett was crying and seemed scared and distressed on the video call as he began to realise his situation in an adult prison. Because it was only their third meeting, there was limited rapport between them. Rhett was then connected to a lawyer from the DARDY team who took a grant of aid for his new charges.

The DARDY social support worker and lawyer supported Rhett whilst he was in the adult prison through Teams meetings and phone calls, building rapport and increasing trust. The DARDY social support workers also organised for Rhett to receive prison visits from his NDIS support coordinator and his occupational therapist. According to the DARDY social support worker, the strong working relationship between Rhett's NDIS coordinator and herself was instrumental in progressing support for Rhett. The DARDY social support worker said, *"It really helped in getting things done"*.

On release from prison at the end of 2023, the DARDY team supported Rhett to comply with his bail conditions. After a successful NDIS application, a support plan was put in place by his NDIS coordinator, with input from the DARDY social support worker. The DARDY social support worker recognised the difficulty of his home environment and the likelihood of fighting with his partner contributing to him connecting to bad family influences, drug use

and offending. As such, she offered to arrange Rhett supported independent living through NDIS. He refused the support and disengaged with the DARDY project.

A few months later, Rhett called the DARDY social support worker from hospital 'out of the blue' after an admission for self-harming. He wanted to talk to her but also felt shame about her seeing him in such a condition. He left hospital and soon after, had a fight with his partner, started using drugs and committing crime and by the end of 2024 he was imprisoned again, this time for six months. The DARDY social support worker visited Rhett in prison, and although he was disengaged at first, and in the social support worker's words, "*Pressing my buttons and making me feel like closing his file*", she continued to visit him in prison.

Over these six months in custody, the DARDY social support worker noticed that Rhett was gaining weight and becoming less fidgety. She also felt that her relationship with Rhett was strengthening, and he was starting to open up more. He was calling regularly to ask her about his bail situation. Together with his NDIS support worker, Rhett and his DARDY social support worker came up with a plan to move him from his home situation and seek supported independent living.

On release from prison in April 2025, Rhett moved into supported accommodation, re-engaged in counselling at the Aboriginal counselling organisation and with other disability supports. He communicated that he really wanted to stay clean. He also recognised the negative influence of family members who were using drugs and whom he would often see in court. He contacted the DARDY social support worker after his first night in supported accommodation. He said that staff of the accommodation had brought him takeaway and that for the first time he had his own bed and room. He had just had the best sleep of his life. Rhett says that he has made a friend where he is living and visits his partner and children regularly. He continues to get weekly counselling support from the same Aboriginal organisation. The DARDY social support worker is currently looking into an assessment of Rhett's functional capacity to support a plan going forward.

Rhett describes the difference that the relationship with the DARDY social support worker and lawyer has had on reducing his dependence on drugs:

When I rock up to court they're always waiting for me...It was different [before] because I had no one there to talk to or like no one to go and see for the support and that...Like before I used to mess around with drugs and that, and like these people will come and ask me for drugs and that, but I don't like doing that no more because that is not me now...I've been telling them "No I don't do that stuff no more, I've moved on and I'm looking for a job and all of that"...Every time I got on drugs they always got me off it. They always found a way to get

me to help, and this is my fourth time being sober, but this is my longest time now. The other times were only two months, then four months, now it has been almost nine months.

Harper's story – A good role model can make all the difference



Harper was 14 when she first encountered a DARDY social support worker. A private lawyer was supporting her through a grant of aid. In her lawyer's words, Harper's rate of offending was "through the roof" and "I couldn't give her any sort of unpleasant news that I have the obligation to tell her without her launching into a verbal tirade and having a go at me, no matter what my involvement."

The DARDY social support worker first met Harper at the In-Roads Children's Court. She had received some negative news about her legal matters and was extremely upset and aggressive. She was later sentenced to six-months detention. Through regular visits to the detention centre, the social support worker slowly built her relationship with Harper, increasing from five-minute visits to 20-minute visits. When Harper was released, she soon started reoffending, and then they met again in court. The DARDY social support worker reconnected with Harper and established a relationship with the Y school where Harper was now beginning to attend. For the last few months, Harper and the DARDY social support worker have been doing weekly activities together. Although she still attends school and another mentoring program, the DARDY social support worker is the first and main positive role model in Harper's life. The social support worker also regularly connects, communicates and provides support to Harper's father and younger sister.

Harper has been engaged in DARDY for more than 10 months. She describes her relationship with the social support worker:

When I talk to [the DARDY social support worker] it doesn't feel like she judges me, you know. She will sit there. She will be honest. She will be straight out. If I am sitting there thinking about a dumb opinion, she will sit there and she will have her say. But you know there is not much she can do, it's not like she can force me not to do it or anything. So, she will have her say, and she will give me her opinion on it. And then we will sit there and talk about it. And then I'll end up listening to her, you know, because it will wake me up more. And it's good because it helps my dad realise too, 'cause they sit there and explain to my dad, and that makes my dad understand.

Harper explains the impact of her relationship with the DARDY social support worker on her criminal behaviours:

And it's helped a lot, yeah. If I had the opportunity to do this from the very start when I was doing crime, I would take it straight out. 'Cause it's like, it's kind of like helping me snap out from doing it. It makes me feel like...Cause when I was doing it so much like I didn't like, cause my dad didn't really care about. He started not caring about it. It never felt like I was disappointing anyone. But like when I do, like when I got charged with stealing and [the DARDY social support worker] and that found out, it kind of felt, it made me feel like I was disappointing people, you know. So that's why I was like, it's starting to snap me out from doing it. Even though I know that I am not disappointing them, but I am in a way. It just kind of feels like a second family basically... that disappointment feeling man, that's a feeling I don't like.

Harper's lawyer remarks that the change in her has been profound and immense. She is no longer offending, and her lawyer finds that she is completely different to work with in now. She has changed from being a highly volatile aggressive individual to someone who will actively contact the DARDY social support worker for advice. He can give her unpleasant news, and for the most part, she will take the news as you would expect: "It really sucks, but okay, well, what should I do from here?" He says, "The interactions now are pleasant and polite, allowing him to do his job without half the amount of stress associated with it."

Harper's relationship with the social support worker and the DARDY project not only has a direct impact on Harper and her offending but also supports Harper's relationship with her younger sister.

*When my little sister is with me... they give her the option to come along [to activities] or she can stay...So, it's good for her cause she's starting to realise too and that feeling and that cause she never really had no mother figure and that. So, it's good...Especially because we got no mother in our household or anything, it definitely feels like I need to be a mother to her you know. And so, when she started doing crime, that had a big fault on me because I f***ed up because she is doing it because I'm doing it, you know. And that's good cause I got help trying to break out of good and bad, cause I'm trying break myself out of it. So, [the DARDY social support worker] and that, there helping me but they're also helping me help her so it feels good...Me and her we used to argue bad, but it's getting better. Like cause when they take us out and stuff it gives me and my little sister time to talk and that. And like 'cause we went on a hike the other day,..And me and my sister was talking about stuff, just having fun. Not worrying about crime or watching our backs. So, it was good, yeah. It has helped a lot.*

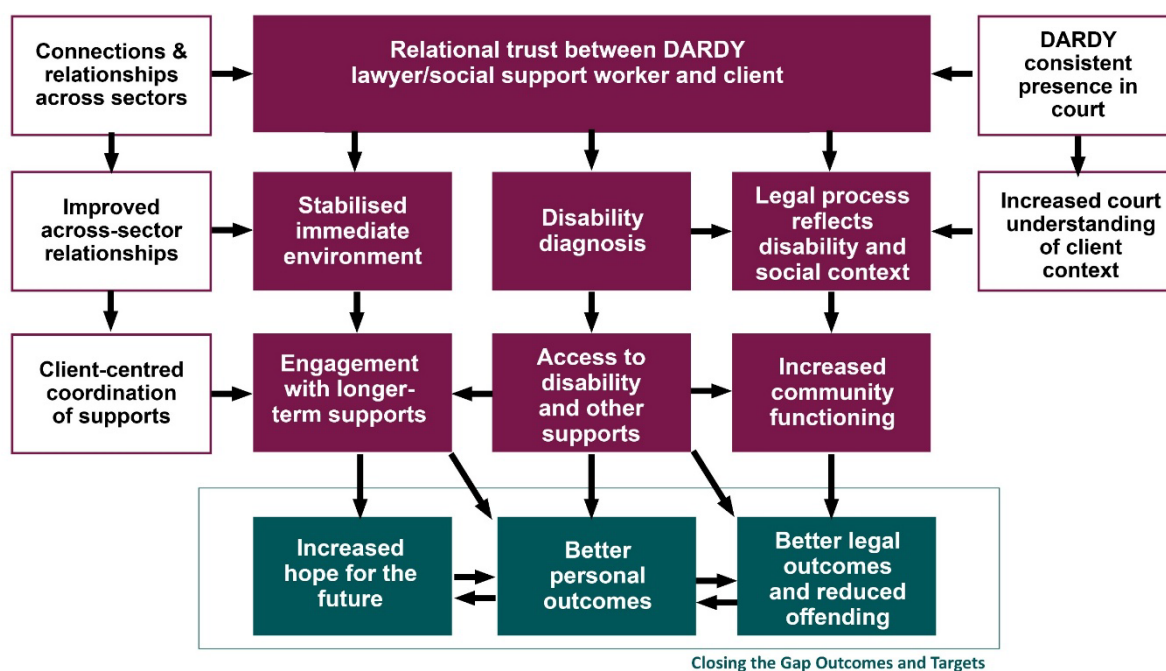
C. Project outcomes – The difference DARDY makes

The evaluation showed evidence of the DARDY project’s outcomes for clients and the project’s contribution to the legal and other systems addressing the needs of young people in the criminal justice system. This section combines the client stories with the broader analysis of the qualitative evaluation data.

Overview of client, stakeholder, and legal system outcomes

Figure 4 summarises the key project outcomes and their interrelatedness.

Figure 4: Working model of the theory of change of the DARDY project outcomes



Supported by the literature, the development of a trusting relationship is a critical outcome for young people, subsequently improving their capability to understand their legal situation, stabilising their immediate environment, sustained engagement with disability, housing, education, health and other support services, better wellbeing and legal outcomes and reduced offending (Fullerton, Bamber and Redmond, 2021). All other outcomes depend on the consistent building of this crucial relationship.

The model in Figure 4 shows that, in addition to supporting client-level outcomes, the DARDY project contributes to a smoother-running court. Additionally, the project eases the pressure on other services supporting the young people, such as education and health.

The persistence of the DARDY lawyers in achieving disability and mental illness diagnosis reports for clients is critical to their legal outcomes and access to long-term NDIS supports. Also critical are the connections and relationships DARDY social support workers build across sectors to ensure continued communication, which is essential for a client-centred approach.

This theory of change shows four levels of connected outcomes, starting with relational trust and ending with wellbeing, education, employment and justice outcomes aligned with the Closing the Gap outcomes and targets.

The evaluation data provide qualitative evidence that DARDY clients achieve these targets, and that the pathway to achieving them is not linear and requires relational trust, consistency, and flexibility within the unique DARDY service provision model.

The sections that follow describe each outcome, with evaluative evidence of their achievement through the DARDY project, starting with shorter-term outcomes (shown at the top of Figure 4) and progressing through to the longer-term outcomes. Each row of outcomes is dependent on the achievement of the outcomes above it in the model. The longer-term outcomes (shown in green at the bottom of the model) are aligned with the Closing the Gap outcomes and targets.

Trusting relationship with DARDY staff

The client stories, staff and stakeholder interviews show that the development of a trusting relationship with the DARDY social support worker is a necessary and profound outcome for clients, enabling the practical supports to address risks in the client's immediate environment and sustained engagement with disability, health, housing, education, employment and other social support systems and positive personal outcomes. Figure 4 summarises the centrality of the trusting relationship and its connection to other personal client outcomes and community safety outcomes (the outcomes shaded in green at the bottom of the model).

This trusting relationship between the client and social support worker takes time, consistency and perseverance to establish and sustain. For many clients, it is the first positive mentoring relationship the young person has experienced. For clients accessing the project through a DARDY lawyer, the development of the relationship with the DARDY social support worker is aided by the lawyer and social support worker working together. The young person can consistently see and connect with the social support worker when they are in court with the DARDY lawyer, before establishing a more formal support relationship.

Olivia describes the impact of her relationships with the DARDY social support worker and lawyer on her ability to function in the community and achieve personal goals.

It's just a matter of work and it's not me the only one putting the work in. It's other people as well. When I fall they can pick me up and they cannot even just pick me up when I fall to the point where I can't do it they will do it for me and pick it up for that time being and then when I'm ready to pick it up again they will pass it back on to me smoothly and I'll pick it

back up and they'll help me work through it. I'm doing it and it's progressing... We've definitely gone past the hump, the really bad stage, we're in the midst of the recovery zone. We're putting those steps in that we've practiced. We're up to this point and they're still helping me maintain it so it's like the maintenance stage of what I've learned and learning.

Connections and relationships across sectors

In addition to their relationship with clients and their families, the relationships DARDY social support workers build with internal and external lawyers, disability and social support services, education and employment services and housing are critical for supporting the young people and their access to these services. For example, a few weeks after Rhett's interview, the DARDY social support worker received communications from his accommodation stating that he had not been paying for his board. The social support worker was able to immediately contact Rhett, his NDIS support worker and the accommodation to address the issue. After talking to Rhett about the seriousness of the non-payment and its impact, he recommenced payments. Having strong, respectful relationships with other services, in addition to a trusting relationship with the client, is critical to maintaining client-centred support. This stakeholder talks about the importance of DARDY social support workers' connections with at-risk clients:

Just recently, a client, who had been referred to us by DARDY, stepped out of [Department of Justice], and unfortunately, stopped taking his medication, and his mental health took a dramatic dip. I was able to refer him back to DARDY. [The client] wasn't in the headspace to manage everything. [The DARDY social support worker did an urgent [mental health treatment] application to help myself, himself and his mum because he was really struggling. Without the [DARDY social support worker's] help we would have been in a situation where his parents would have been at risk because of his escalations at home. The [DARDY project] was also trying to support him to get legal aid.

Stakeholders involved in providing disability support highlighted the importance of the DARDY project for communicating information about clients' bail conditions and any curfews. This communication facilitates appropriate disability support and assisting the clients in getting to appointments and reporting to the police station, as this may be something a client with a cognitive disability may not remember to do.

Several stakeholders highlighted that connecting services in a client-centred way was a strength of the DARDY social support workers. This stakeholder says:

[The DARDY social support workers] are the ones that know what's going on... who's walking alongside them, like going, "Mate, NDIS is a really good thing for you. Let's go to that

appointment". [They] provide that glue where there's the fractures with the primary responsibility holders to then get this kid a long-term solution.

Consistent presence of the DARDY team in court

The impact of the DARDY project on supporting the courts and other service delivery organisations is supported by the willing participation in a stakeholder interview (10 out of 16 (63% response rate) invited across the diversity of stakeholders including magistrates, private lawyers and other service providers.

Several stakeholders described the positive impact the DARDY project had on the running of the court through:

- the influence of the social support workers on the behaviours of the young clients in the court room because of the strength of their existing relationship;
- the DARDY workers' knowledge of the young people's contexts, difficulties and barriers;
- regular presence of the DARDY lawyers and their management of their team in what is appropriate and respectful for court processes;
- the consistency of the DARDY lawyers in court attendance, their knowledge of the young people appearing at court and ability to regularly step in and appear as the duty lawyer when the clients' grant lawyers do not come to court.

This stakeholder talks about how invaluable it is to have the DARDY social support worker in court:

It's just really having that support with us on hand here at court when somebody's really distressed to say, look, I need somebody to help this person...maybe just go for a coffee, help them get home or if not actually physically take them home. But they help them with maybe a SmartRider or something like that. So it's just actually having them here on hand so you're not ringing people and having to book people in because things are very ad hoc. You never know who's going to be arrested. You never know what the circumstances are, what the presentation.

This magistrate talks about the positive impact DARDY lawyers and social support workers have on operation of the court.

The [DARDY] lawyers know each of the kids...When their grant lawyers don't turn up, it's the DARDY lawyers that appear for the young people.

The DARDY [social support workers] have good relationships with the young people and their input into meetings with me were invaluable...DARDY is individualised, sensitive and

considered in what they suggest as a way forward for the young people. They are transparent with the court and in terms of challenges, their suggestions were useful to me.

Stabilising the environment to sustain engagement with disability and other support

The first of the three outcome pathways coloured in maroon in Figure 4 highlight the importance of stabilising the client's immediate environment in enabling longer-term supports, and the critical role of the across-sector relationships in supporting client progress.

Stabilising the clients' immediate environment

All three client stories highlight the significance of stabilising clients' immediate environment for achieving connections to service delivery and supports, client wellbeing and reduced offending. The home environment of clients and lack of social supports contributes to offending and presents barriers to engagement to positive supports. For example, it was critical to support Rhett's independent living to reduce the volatility of his living environment and its connection to his drug use. Supporting Harper's father contributed to improvements in her family relationships and in her sense of support. Olivia describes her situation when she was first in contact with the DARDY project and the support she experienced:

My life was very different before DARDY got involved. I had absolutely no support system. I had no links into counselling and I wasn't following up on my health. I had been hit by a car so my health was declining rapidly. I was between being homeless and living in my car and then going into the caravan and the DARDY project helped me getting an air conditioner in the hot times. They helped me do shopping trips...I am able to call [the DARDY social support worker] and she helps me daily with everything like doctors, just everything you would need in life as a person with intellectual and physical disabilities. It's really hard to do by myself.

Sustained engagement with disability and other supports

Positive client outcomes depend on connection to disability and other supports such as education, employment, housing and health. The DARDY project supported connection and sustained engagement through persistent, consistent long-term support in NDIS applications and establishing and supporting relationships with other service delivery providers. As Olivia explains:

[The DARDY social support worker] helped organise Outcare workers to start coming to my dental appointments and stuff like that... So she passed it along to someone else so I could have that support system...[They support] me regardless of the situation. I've been in some really hectic head spaces like losing my mind and being physically incapable, paralyzed from my injuries. They were there for me in every single way I needed them to be. And they're still

doing that. They're helping me set up nursing and shower care and in the meantime waiting for NDIS which will be really good...They're just consistent... Because my living situation isn't wheelchair or anything accessible, I'm living in a caravan. That is what [the DARDY social support worker] is also helping me with, we've done a housing application as well, that's like a huge thing...They've reminded me along the way that it is me doing the work. But without them putting the steps in and giving me the opportunities to do so I wouldn't have been able to do that.

This stakeholder describes how she sees the role of the DARDY project in supporting young people to engage with the support services they need:

The [DARDY social support workers] have all been really fantastic at building that relationship with the young people so it feels safe to go to places with them and attend appointments, attend school and stuff...When the justice involvement finishes, that's when the services typically drop off which is when I think the recidivism is more at risk of happening because they don't have that regular routine, and they're left to kind of fend for themselves.

The stakeholder provides an example showing the importance of DARDY social support staff coordinating supports for clients and their families:

[The social support worker] worked really hard to take [the client] to his appointments, build that relationship with him, provide him with opportunities to connect with the community, helped out with food hampers and when mum was having issues, helped out with support letters... [The social support worker] provided that central point of contact for mum because she was becoming quite overwhelmed with how many services and how many people were contacting her.

Getting a disability diagnosis and access to disability supports

The second major pathway to better outcomes for young people engaging with the DARDY project starts with getting a disability diagnosis and then supporting them through an often challenging and lengthy NDIS application process for disability supports.

For the majority of DARDY clients, participation in the project provided them with their first opportunity to get a disability diagnosis and the assistance they required to access NDIS supports. The DARDY lawyers' role involves accessing disability and mental health reports for the client's court matters and the social support workers provide support in the NDIS application, which in many cases involves a complexity of paperwork, including seeking identification documents, and at the same time ensuring the client gets their immediate

needs supported. One of the DARDY lawyers explains the work required for a client's assessments and NDIS application:

[The social support worker] has been massively involved getting assessments done so he can get NDIS. One of the biggest issues is that he came over with his family as a refugee when he was very young, but his family have ceased all contact with him, so he doesn't have access to any records, any passports or immigration documents, and he doesn't have any form of ID. The NDIS requirements are very high, so [his social support worker] is trying very hard to get the required identification, and we're still waiting for the neuropsych report. We're almost there...He's now living independently in a Department of Housing house. He's been trying to keep to himself, and he's been at home waiting for this support to be put into place. He hasn't reoffended at all since he came out [of prison] five months ago.

The DARDY lawyer describes their surprise that for many clients the complexity of their disability and mental health situation had not been explored until their interaction with the DARDY project. They say of one client:

Despite the fact he's someone that when you talk to him for even a few minutes, you can see that he has a lot of complexities that were never explored. I wonder if it had been [explored] back then, would we be here now... The period of time he has had unmedicated due to his circumstances in custody combined with a lot of childhood trauma has had an impact on his cognitive functioning that's been irreversible... We do what we can to help make the rest of his life be at least as best as it can be. He's certainly someone who can be a productive member of the community. That's telling by the fact that he hasn't reoffended and is starting to have hobbies and things like that... [He shared] a photo of him standing next to his fridge with his thumbs up just smiling and looking really happy. And it's just like this really crazy moment where you think of, like, this is how far he's come. And whilst he's done really well, he wouldn't be there without all this support around him.

A legal process that reflects the client's context contributes to community functioning

The DARDY project plays an instrumental role in:

- Supporting clients to understand and make informed decisions about their legal situation
- Increasing the understanding of the court and other stakeholders of the young people's disability and social context.

Both of these outcomes are important factors for increased community functioning and better legal outcomes for young people.

Understanding their legal situation is crucial for clients to make informed decisions about their legal matters, to communicate their needs and expectations with their lawyer and is a major contributor to a better legal outcome. For clients who have cognitive disability and social vulnerabilities, achieving this can be challenging. The interviews with the DARDY lawyers and clients show that this legal understanding is worked on and built over time. As one of the DARDY lawyers explains:

Both [the social support worker] and I were trying to explain to him and his mum about how the legal system works and about why it is the way it is. Trying to really hone that into them to the point where they were fully able to grasp it and understand it and be able to be in the community which was really, really important.

Olivia describes her lawyer's support for her understanding of her legal situation:

She's been very clear on every bit I've been confused about. Anything that would potentially stress me out, she would already jump on it and be like "I know this would be potentially stressful, but it's okay because we are going to do this and this"...At first I saw court as a very scary place. Very like I don't want to be here. They're going to find anything and everything wrong with me. I just feared it, I didn't want to come here but I knew that I had to... Having the support system, my mindset on court has changed.

Hope for the future and better personal outcomes

Hope for the future is an important milestone for youth mental and emotional wellbeing, encompassing relationships with family and friends, connection to education and employment, health and safety. Hopeful expectations for the future have been shown to play an important role in the positive development of young people. Hopeful expectations are closely linked to personal outcomes such as good relationships, learning achievements and employment (Callina et al., 2013).

As Figure 4 shows hope for the future as a wellbeing outcome for young people requires that the young person first has a trusting relationship, stabilisation of their immediate environment, a disability diagnosis and supports and sustained engagement with other long-term supports including education, employment, housing and health. Based on the interviews, achieving these outcomes takes around 18 months, is not a smooth pathway and requires consistent support from the DARDY staff. As Olivia describes in her story her life has changed over an 18 month period from "I am going to be stuck on drugs for the rest of my life...die from drugs in my system or kill myself through something reckless" to "I am going to get somewhere stable to live and it's going to be comfortable and I'm going to be able to do study and work and move onto the career I've dreamed of".

After two years of support from the DARDY project fifteen-year-old Harper looks forward to more hiking and other new experiences. She says:

I never went for a hike before but [the DARDY social support worker] took me on a hike. I don't know how they convinced me but they did!...There was a waterfall and shit. It was new. It was like experiencing something new...It was so different 'cause I don't normally like see that. We just walk around the city all the time – round, round, round. Just looking at the same things. Going to the same places. Doing crimes. Doing the same thing. But going on that hike. I don't know what it was, it was just different, the waterfalls and that. Just seeing that and dropping a bit of weight at the same time!

When asked about his goals for the future when interviewed eighteen months after he started with the DARDY project, Rhett replies:

I want to go back to work so I am looking for a job... Getting a job and then getting a licence so I am driving my family around and that and getting my own house.

Better legal outcomes and reduced offending

The evaluation provides qualitative evidence of better legal outcomes and reduced offending in young people with developmental disabilities. The DARDY lawyers establish and communicate the disability and social context of offending, enabling this to be taken into account in the justice system. For example, Olivia's story shows that the DARDY lawyer was able to uncover multiple disabilities, including a major head injury from a recent domestic violence incident. This resulted in a revised legal outcome, better community functioning and personal outcomes. The interview with Olivia and her lawyer lend support to this result contributing to a lower risk for future offending.

Other client stories and interviews show a decrease in the frequency and severity of client offending over the duration of DARDY project participation. The three client stories highlighted in this report lend support to the pathway to reduced offending (as shown in Figure 4). Harper's lawyer describes his perspective on her change in criminal behaviour:

It's so remarkable. I can't help but look at it from the perspective across the course [of Harper's] life. Assuming [Harper] stays on this current trajectory across the course of an ordinary person's life, 80 years, offending usually stops once a person loses their physical capacity. You know they have severe and complex psychosocial profiles. So, across decades [the DARDY social support worker] may well have assisted in essentially preventing literally hundreds of these sorts of offences. Like hundreds of violence-based and theft-based offences. Which was the direction this particular juvenile was going down and now isn't.

D. The strengths of the project model

The key features of the DARDY project model include:

- A close partnership between lawyers and social support workers
- Consistency and flexibility of support for clients and their families
- Ability to work with young people with complex needs using a strength-based relational approach
- Building of relationships with disability and other support services facilitating a client-centred approach
- Quality and diversity of the DARDY staff team.

Lawyer and social support worker partnership

The close working relationship between the four DARDY social support workers and four DARDY lawyers builds the understanding and skills of each in the different roles. This supports both the client as well as the court processes. As this private lawyer describes:

I think that the integration of the legal and the non-legal elements with DARDY really helps. I mean no support worker is going to have their head wrapped around all of the legal issues or anything but I find definitely...the fact that the support works are often coming to court and seeing what's happening and understanding what's happening is really beneficial to the kids because they don't necessarily take it all in, and their parents aren't there, or their parents don't know what's going on and so the DARDY support workers are often that kind of second line of: "Do you remember what happened at court? This is what we've got to do. You know, this is the follow up. This is the takeaway..." and I yeah, I think that that is really, really beneficial.

Consistency of flexibility of client and family support

Without a fixed duration or strict non-negotiable hours of support, the DARDY team can provide regular contact and more intensive client support when required. They can also provide support alongside other services.

As this stakeholder says:

Pretty much all of my clients get anxious about what's happening next or what just happened or whatever in the court proceedings and just having that person that is engaging with them, you know, might be taking them to their urinalysis or might be taking them to appointments. Having that person know broadly what's going on can really help tamper down that anxiety. Which means that their outcomes are better because they're not losing their minds and they're so focused on what they actually need to be doing instead of what they're worrying about.

One of the private lawyers notes the importance of the DARDY social support workers' regular contact with clients:

And I've seen that play out with a few of my kids quite a few times, you know where it's been a stabilising effect for them. Having someone else who knows what's going on, that's that they're seeing much more regularly than me.

Other stakeholders note the importance of the workers' ability to be flexible and adapt to the client's circumstances:

I have seen them handle and adapt to different situations really, really well. They are very persistent, and they work quite well with parents as well as young people as well, so most of them are good at that relationship building with families and young people.

Strength-based approach with complex clients

Several stakeholders described the ability of the DARDY team to work effectively with clients with complex needs in a strength-based, trauma informed way.

This magistrate says:

[DARDY staff] are very in-tune with the young people and sensitive to disability, to cultural needs. [They] don't have the barriers that other government programs seem to have. Whereas DARDY is a lot more individualised, sensitive, a lot more considered in terms of what they were suggesting was the way forward for these young people, what they thought the difficulties were. I think they are much more transparent with the court. Because no case is the same, no case is easy. Every kid has a million barriers and a million levels, and that ability to really tailor each and every submission and every suggestion and every intervention for that young person I think is invaluable.

Another stakeholder points out the ability of the DARDY workers to build relationships with the more complex clients and families:

They do quite well with the more complex kids and the ones that maybe haven't really engaged well with court orders or traditionally had difficulties in attending courts and where their parents are also struggling a bit. They are very persistent and they work quite well with parents as well as young people as well. Most of them are good at that relationship building with families and young people.

Building partnership relationships for a client-centred approach

The DARDY social support workers build relationships with disability, education, housing and other service providers as they work with clients. This supports the continuity of client support when service providers can contact the social support worker directly, for example,

when the client has not attended appointments or they have missed an accommodation payment.

Quality and diversity of the team

Stakeholders and clients talked about the quality of the staff. One of the magistrates familiar with several of the social support workers and lawyers says:

It's the quality of the people [in the positions] because they've got the right attitude towards it. You know, it is not as if they couldn't be doing something else... They have the training and experience to do [their job] really well and that means they're getting better outcomes for the young people because they're engaging better with them... They are very culturally appropriate and well trained in that regard.

Several stakeholders talked about the importance of the diversity of the team of social support workers and how this contributed to the development of appropriate and effective staff-client relationships.

The DARDY team is continuing to be build capability though consistent professional development opportunities. For example, in the nine-month period from February to October 2025, DARDY staff participated in more than seventeen training programs. This included knowledge and skill building in delivering services to clients with developmental disabilities, cultural competency and trauma-informed service delivery. Table 4 summarises the professional development activities DARDY staff have participated in.

Table 4: Professional development training DARDY staff participated in (Feb – Oct 2025)

Category of training	Number of sessions	Number of staff participating
Developmental disabilities	5	9
Cultural competency	4	9
Trauma-informed service and mental health	3	6
Working with young people in the justice system	4	2
Other topics (including family and Domestic violence)	1	3
Total	17	9

The staff survey administered in May and in October 2025 showed a statistically significant increase in knowledge, skills and confidence of DARDY staff in four of five areas relevant to the delivery of client support. Table 5 shows the difference in average scores across the different topic areas and the results of the statistical test (Wilcoxon Signed-Rank). Topic area 1, *Confidence in delivery services to people with intellectual disability* is based on a validated instrument (Dagnan, 2025). Topics 2 to 5 were developed to measure the specific areas of confidence, knowledge and skills aligned with DARDY client work. A copy of the staff survey instrument is provided in Appendix 3.

The maximum score for the Likert-scale for Topic 1 was 5. For Topics 2 to 5, the maximum score was 4.

Table 5: Results of staff knowledge, skills and confidence pre/post survey (n=9)

Topic area	Number questions	Average score		Max score	Wilcoxon Signed Rank test result
		May '25	Oct '25		
1. Confidence in delivering services to people with intellectual disability	14	4.0	4.5	5.0	Z=2.5, p=0.007
2. Communication and relationship-building skills	8	3.3	3.5	4.0	Z=0.9, p=0.2
3. Ability to identify client disability, health and social needs	8	3.1	3.5	4.0	Z=2.5, p=0.007
4. Learning and applying knowledge about disability, child development and social context	7	2.8	3.5	4.0	Z=2.3, p=0.01
5. Utilising Legal Aid WA and external support systems	8	2.8	3.3	4.0	Z=2.3, p=0.01

E. Project limitations – How the project can be improved

A strong theme of the stakeholder interviews was the need for relationship-focused work to support the sustained engagement of high-risk young people with legal, disability, education, housing, health and other supports is immense, not only in Perth but in regional Western Australia. There is evidence that the support DARDY provides is highly valued, needed and effective and that expanding the program into other areas or creating larger support teams within the current project scope, should be considered.

Harper's lawyer says:

Having someone else come in and put the effort in to build a relationship and then offer them positive advice "You know, maybe you shouldn't be doing this" or "Maybe this is a good idea or perhaps steer clear of them" has a wildly compounding effect in the long term. I see plenty of [young] clients that don't have this support. I could count at least 10 clients who if I could get them [a DARDY social support worker] I would do so in a heartbeat and it would only be positive.

Various project limitations that were identified by evaluation stakeholders. Where issues were raised, stakeholders were prompted to consider actions that might strengthen or improve the project. Limitations and options to address the limitations are presented in this section through several suggested improvements. These include:

- Clearly defining and effectively communicating a clear project outline (i.e., project objectives, staff roles and responsibilities, client criteria) will enable stakeholders to have more clearly defined partnership parameters and expectations for engagement with DARDY
- Proactively supporting the wellbeing of DARDY staff, recognising the value of the intensive relational support they provide as well as potential for burnout
- Improving data collection for the client-related activities of the social support workers
- Advocating for mental health supports needed for client referrals.

Clarification and communication of project role, objectives and other parameters

Legal and social sector stakeholders/collaborators were sometimes unclear about the DARDY project parameters. Stakeholders knew the role of the DARDY social support workers was based on relationships with young clients and their families and supported their engagement with other services such as education, employment, housing and disability. They knew less about the disability support focus of the project (what that involved), the

role of the internal partnerships between DARDY lawyers and social support workers, and parameters and boundaries for information sharing with other organisations.

There are other projects that provide similar relational support for young people in the criminal justice system, for example the Western Australian government project Target 120 Plus and Old Ways New Ways run by a consortium led by the Aboriginal Legal Service of WA Ltd (ALSWA). The DARDY project has a distinct model and remit. Clearly defining the project definition and the roles and responsibilities of the organisation and staff in their collaboration with other agency partners is important for supporting stakeholder relationships and increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the partnerships and project itself.

A government stakeholder says:

It is difficult without knowing what the roles are and what expectations are for the DARDY support workers...It hasn't affected our desire to work with them. It just makes it a little bit more difficult to have [important] conversations with them.

Several stakeholders pointed out the need for clear defining of projects and staff roles is important for all stakeholders working in the youth criminal justice space.

Proactively supporting the wellbeing of DARDY staff

The DARDY project is demonstrating substantive evidence of positive outcomes that not only increase the support and wellbeing of young people with cognitive disabilities but reduce current and future crime in the community. The evaluation also shows that the personal and professional attributes of current staff is sound. For the longevity of the project, it is important to proactively address the current and future wellbeing needs of staff. Effectively identifying staff capacity, determining realistic caseloads and providing support such as access to appropriate regular counselling to prevent staff 'burn-out' resulting from client complexity and needs is recommended.

Improved data collection

Currently there is a lack of data collection that can accurately document and reflect social support worker activities with clients. This is partly due to the organisation migrating to a new client record system (CRM) in December 2024, the system being set up for the collection of legal service data. Social support workers also have substantial workloads. Improved data collection for the social support worker role, including occasions and types of service provided, time recording for client interactions and other client work is critical to evaluating and understanding the activities of staff and work planning. Access to crime data

through eCourts to quantitatively evidence changes in criminal offences of DARDY clients would be of great value to the continued project evaluation.

Advocating for mental health support for clients

Many DARDY clients have mental health issues in addition to cognitive disabilities (the existence of co-occurring needs across disability and mental health is well established). This was the area of client need most highlighted by staff, who also noted a significant referral and service gap. It is suggested that the DARDY team and/or Legal Aid WA advocate, where possible, that more suitable mental health services be available for the DARDY clients.

F. Judgement of the merit and worth of the DARDY project

The recent words of a District Court Judge to a DARDY client provide insight into the value of the project to young people with developmental disabilities and the justice system:

You're lucky, as I say, in a sense, that you have found an answer to your problems and the answer is that there is a way to deal with your problems, and that is through appropriate mental health strategies, medication and the very enormous assistance you've received from [the DARDY social support worker].

This evaluation provides evidence of client outcomes from short-term changes that are necessary for client progress, to long-term results that have a significant impact on the lives of clients, their families and the broader community. The three client case studies presented are representative of:

- The complexity of clients', often hidden, social and disability context
- How dependent positive outcomes are on the establishment and maintenance of a trusting mentor relationship
- The reality of the bumpy and sometimes unavoidably protracted journey from where clients start to good outcomes for the client and reduced offending.

The narratives presented and supporting data show the achievement of long-term outcomes for young people that are aligned with Closing the Gap targets, including that Aboriginal children and young people:

- Are healthy and strong
- Engage in education and employment
- Are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system.

From the qualitative evidence, it is likely that investment in DARDY support for 85 clients in the year, including 43 children under, will have prevented at least several years of youth detention and imprisonment, saving 1.56M a year for every youth in detention. The reduced crime is likely to represent a cost saving for families and communities of clients, and this is an additional value that is more than can be represented by a dollar figure.

Additionally, the DARDY project provides future value through the establishment of sustained cross-sector connections to support children and young people with developmental disabilities and to improve the court environment.

The current evaluation presents preliminary findings over a relatively short period of time. Continuation of the program and evaluation will provide the opportunity to use the strengthening quantitative data sources to strengthen the evidence base and gain more specific knowledge about this unique model and its contribution to closing the gap.

Recommendations

The major recommendations based on the evaluation of the DARDY project are summarised below.

A. Continuation of the DARDY project

- Continue to fund the DARDY project to support young people with developmental disabilities interacting with the criminal justice system.
- Further investigate expanding the operation of the DARDY project in Perth and introducing the DARDY project to key regional areas of Western Australia.

B. Communication of key features of the project model

- Communicate the success factors of the unique model for consideration for adopting in other regions of Western Australia and for other Australian Jurisdictions.

C. Project improvements and sustainability

- Clarify and communicate the role of the DARDY project, objectives and other parameters to stakeholders in the justice and other sectors for improved collaboration.
- Proactively support the well-being of DARDY social support workers and lawyers to ensure longevity of their roles.

D. Improvements in quantitative data evidence

- Improve the internal collection of client output data, including hours and type of social support and legal service provided for clients. *These improvements are currently being actioned.*
- Improve internal quantitative data collection of client outcomes through routine use and data entry of intake and closure information, including data on disability diagnosis and support, referrals to disability and other services, increase in legal understanding, personal outcomes, social and cultural connections.
- Request access to eCourts data to establish quantitative evidence of change in patterns of offending between entry and exit from the DARDY project.
- Establish a way of calculating the cost per-client of different ways of supporting clients (e.g. Cost of legal and social support combined, cost of legal support (inhouse case and duty lawyer service)

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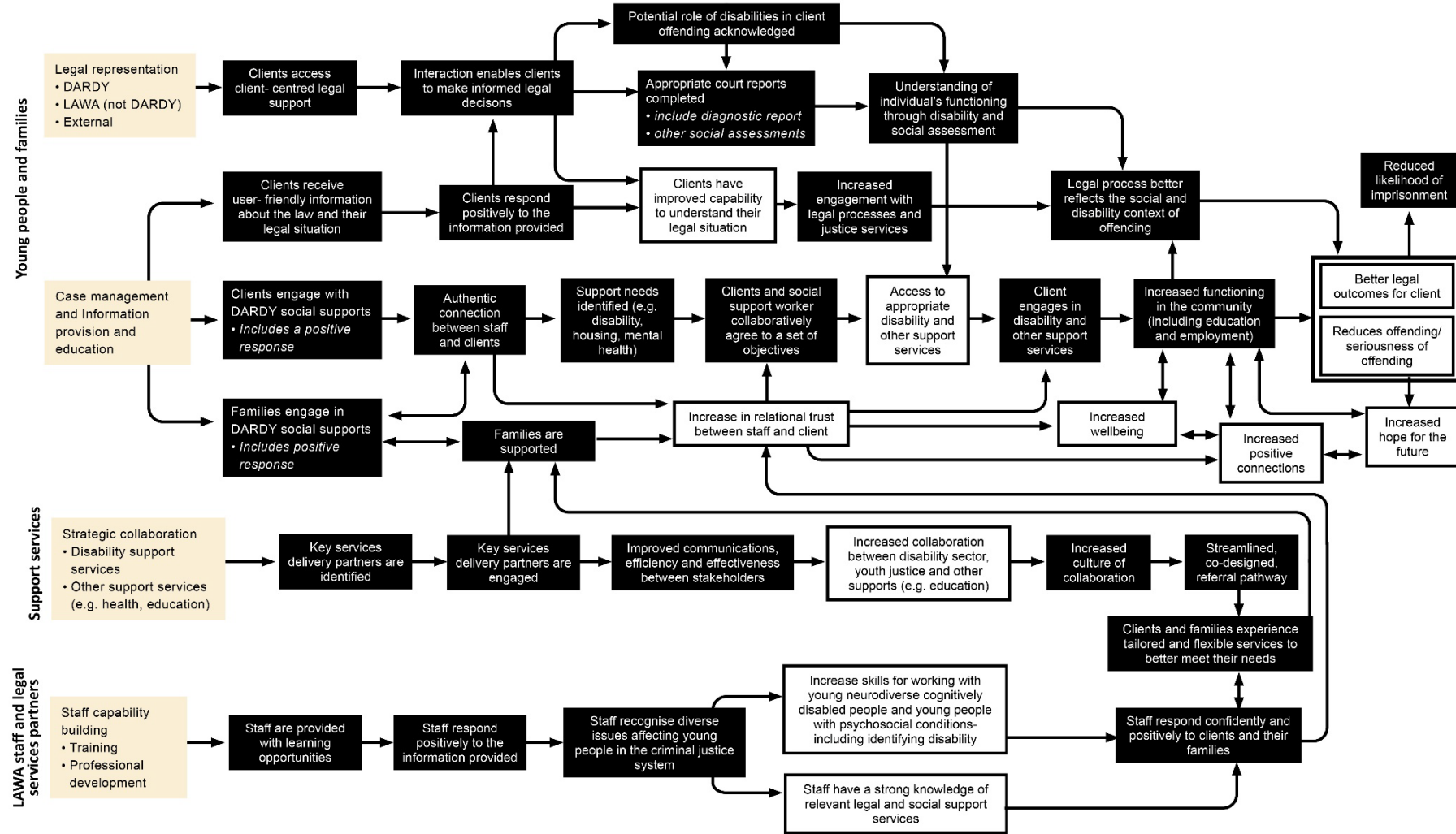
List of abbreviations

AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
CRM	Client Relationship Management
DARDY	Disability Advocacy and Referral Diversion for Young People
eCourt	Secure web portal for documents relevant to a court hearing
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme

Appendices

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Appendix 1: DARDY Theory of Change model



External factors

- Information silos
- Systems need reforming (e.g. education)
- NDIS changes (including increased barriers to referral)
- Lack of disability screening (identification) and understanding by front-line workers (e.g. police)
- Lack of service (e.g. Health services) for referral to

Principles

- Client (and family) centred
 - Culturally safe, Trauma informed, Strengths based, Holistic
- Tailored
- Child safe

Assumptions

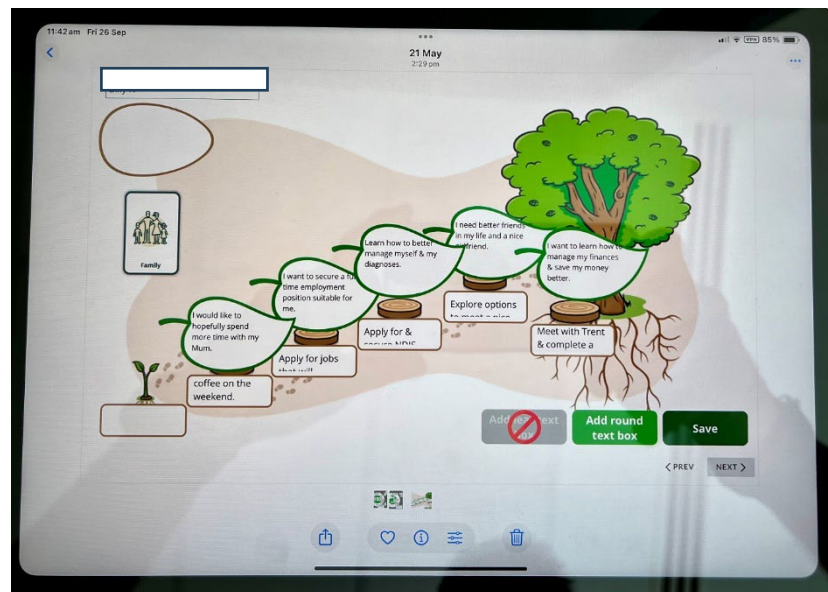
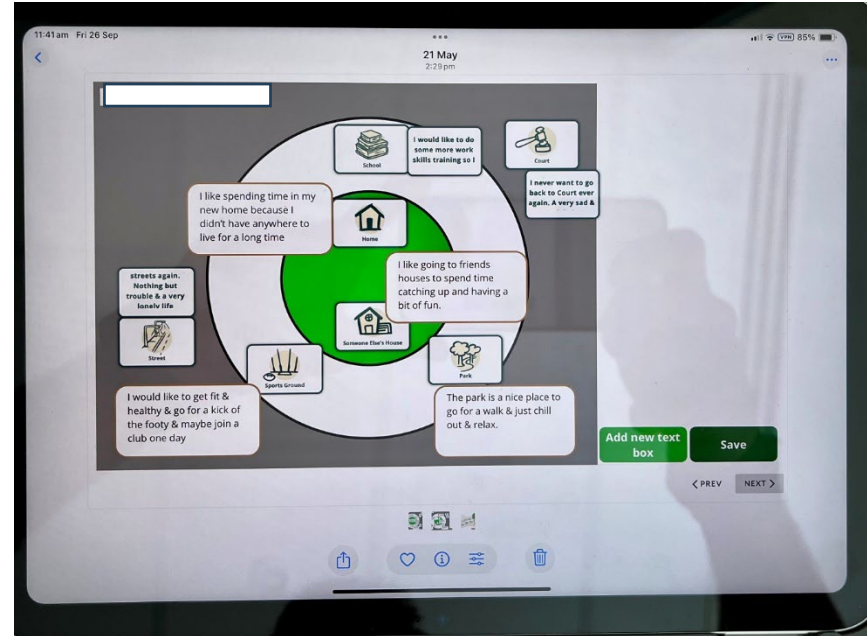
- Clients have the individual capability to reach required competence

Risks

- Clients need the additional practical support to engage in disability and other support services



Appendix 2: Sample of completed Visual Tool used by DARDY social support workers



DARDY STAFF SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

Survey purpose

This survey will be distributed to DARDY project staff (including social support workers and lawyers) at two to three time points in 2025 (April, August, December 2025). The survey will be distributed by the Legal Aid Evaluation Team via an online link with an explanatory email (in line with the broader engagement and communications strategy about the DARDY Evaluation).

The survey design follows a time series research design whereby ‘point-in-time’ measures are compared across time. The individual responses will be matched across time for statistical analysis⁶.

It is designed to be completed anonymously by staff members working for DARDY, and only the Evaluation Team will have access to individual responses for the purpose of analysis as described above. Unit-level data will be stored within the Evaluation Unit and not shared outside the Evaluation Team.

Data collected through the survey aims to help understand:

1. What is the baseline (and subsequent) levels of confidence, skills, knowledge and understanding that DARDY staff have and apply to their role?
2. What are staff gaps in competencies and training needs for working with DARDY clients?

Key findings can be used to track changes, provide evidence to support staff training and development and to inform the evidence-base for the DARDY approach to working with clients.

Validated measures

One validated measure has been included in the survey as question 1 – the Therapy Confidence Scale – Intellectual Disabilities (Dagnan, 2015) (adapted to context).

The remaining questions were developed with the DARDY context in mind, based on consultations with the program manager, Theory of Change process, a literature review, and a scoping process that examined other measures.

⁶ For the small sample size of DARDY staff, matching is required to ensure there is enough statistical power to demonstrate a difference if one exists. The practicalities of doing this using the SurveyMonkey platform and ensuring that the identified data is only viewable by the Evaluation Team is currently being determined.

PARTICIPANT SURVEY

Consent/landing page

This survey aims to capture the understandings and skills of staff working on the DARDY project, and how they change over time with support and training. Your individual responses will be 'matched' by the Evaluation Team for statistical analysis of change over time. Summary information – never your personal responses – may be shared with the DARDY team and LAWA more broadly, to help inform the evaluation of DARDY.

The survey can take up to 20 minutes, but you can stop the survey whenever you like.

Other key points about consenting to this survey:

- All information given will be treated confidentially.
- All information will be securely stored in the Evaluation Unit and individual responses will not be accessible to anyone beyond this team.
- You can choose not to answer any question.
- If you change your mind and no longer want to participate in the survey, you can do so at any time up until the survey is completed.
- After submission of the survey you can email us at evaluation@legalaid.wa.gov.au to request your information is removed.

If you would like a copy of this information, or a more comprehensive explanation of what has been outlined above, or have any questions please email evaluation@legalaid.wa.gov.au.

About you

What is your role in the DARDY project?

(Please select the one that best describes your role)

- Social support worker
- Program coordinator
- Lawyer
- Other, please describe _____

Confidence in working with clients

This section asks about your levels of confidence in building and maintaining a relationship with your clients. Please rate your confidence for each focus of client work. If you are unsure or have not had the opportunity to work with clients in this way please select 'Unsure/Not applicable'.

When working with clients, how confident are you that you can...?

	Not confident at all	A little confident	Somewhat confident	Confident	Highly confident	Unsure/Not applicable
a. Listen carefully and understand what the client is trying to communicate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Communicate information to a client.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Be empathetic towards a client.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Understand the impact that issues related to their disability have on a client's life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Develop a trusting professional relationship with a client.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Gather information from a client so that their difficulties can be better understood?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Explain the legal processes to a client so they know what is going on around them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Explain to the client what they are expected to do to meet their legal obligations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Help the client identify the things that led to the offending behaviour.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Help the client identify things they can do to avoid the offending behaviour.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Use knowledge of disability services and supports to help a client (e.g., linking them to the right support or services)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. Find the most effective way to work with clients?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. Work with care-givers and other important people in the lives of clients?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. End the intervention with a client in a way that will facilitate continued progress?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Communication and relationship-building skills

This section asks about the skills you apply when you engage with clients. Please rate your skills and abilities for each area. If you are unsure or have not had the opportunity to apply a particular skill in your work, please select 'Unsure/Not applicable'.

When working with clients, how developed are your skills and abilities to...?

	Not developed	Under-developed	Developed	Well developed	Unsure/Not applicable
a. Know if a client has understood what has been said	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Identify if a client is struggling with a task	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. De-escalate and coregulate with clients	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Promote emotional regulation (and build client capacity to do this)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Manage challenging behaviours (e.g., provide support, assess and respond to risk)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Communicate with the families of clients	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Be culturally responsive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Identifying client needs

Having an understanding of things that might be impacting clients may help inform you about specific needs – such as the impact of trauma, specific diagnoses, health needs and social needs. This section asks about your ability to identify and anticipate the needs of clients. Please rate your skills and abilities for each area. If you are unsure or have not had the opportunity to apply a particular skill in your work, please select ‘Unsure/Not applicable’.

How would you assess your ability to apply the following to help identify and understand your clients’ needs?

	Not developed	Under developed	Developed	Well developed	Unsure/Not applicable
a. Identify health needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Identify social needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Understand and appropriately use diagnostic language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Understand the intersections between mental health and intellectual disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Understand the importance of social inclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Understand the impact of trauma on intellectual disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Understand the impact of substance abuse on disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Consider the role of support workers and relatives in supporting a client’s needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Applying knowledge

The following items look at the knowledge that is particularly relevant for your role of working with DARDY clients, and how this knowledge can be applied when working through issues that your client faces. Please rate your knowledge for each area. If certain areas of knowledge have not been relevant to your work with clients or you are unsure whether you know enough to make an assessment, please select 'Unsure/Not applicable'.

To what extent have you been able to learn about and apply knowledge to support your clients?

	Not developed	Under developed	Developed	Well developed	Unsure/Not applicable
a. Knowledge of different types of intellectual disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Understanding of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Understanding of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Understanding of Acquired Brain Injury	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Knowledge of child and adolescent development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Knowledge of disability within different cultural contexts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Utilising support systems to help clients

When you work with clients, sometimes your knowledge of support systems beyond DARDY, and how to access that support, can significantly benefit clients. This section asks about your ability to understand the supports available and apply them to your DARDY client work. Please rate your skills and abilities for each area. If you are unsure or have not had the opportunity to apply a particular skill, please select 'Unsure/Not applicable'.

How developed are your skills and abilities to support your clients by...?

	Not developed	Under developed	Developed	Well developed	Unsure/Not applicable
a. Engaging with multidisciplinary teams	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Understanding medical reports and terminology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Understanding decision-making frameworks and their differences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Knowing about social support options for people with intellectual disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Understanding the NDIS application processes and planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Utilising NDIS supports (once accessed)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Next steps

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey. As this survey has focused on skills and competencies that support your ability to work well with clients, there are two final optional questions regarding your training and support needs.

How interested are you in further professional development and training?

- Extremely interested
- Very interested
- Moderately interested
- Slightly interested
- Not at all interested

Are there any specific areas of skill development that stand out to you, that you would like to develop further? (Please specify)

Are there any barriers to you having access to the skill development you would like or need? (Please specify)

DARDY Client Interview Guide

Purpose

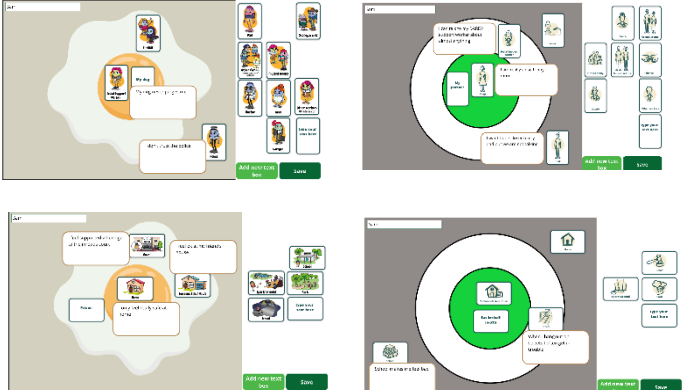
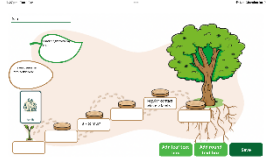
The purpose of the DARDY client interviews is to understand any changes in clients' lives that might have been because of their participation in the DARDY project. We hope to explore four areas of change:

1. Positive social connections – with family, friends, community and culture
2. Increased access to and support from disability and other services
3. Relationship with and support from the DARDY team – social support workers and lawyers
4. Increased wellbeing (life satisfaction) – family, friends, employment/education, health, safety

The interviews will take around 30 minutes.

Using the EvalTool visual tool

The EvalTool visual tool is designed to help structure an indepth conversation with clients around the four change areas. The table below shows the relevant pages of the EvalTool to use for the different four different areas.

Topic areas	Visual tool reference
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Positive social connections 2. Increased access to other services 3. Relationship with and support from the DARDY team 	<p>Page 1 and 2</p> 
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Goals and plans 	<p>Pages 3,4,5,6,7 – Family, friends, employment/education, health, safety</p> 

The following section provides sample questions to use with the visual tool.

Preparing for the interview

As an interviewer, you will be given handover information from the DARDY social support worker. Use this to think about which aspects of the interview may be most relevant for your client, and highlight the areas or questions you would like to focus on.

Read through the sample questions for each of the change areas. Each of these sections also include some example prompts and probes to help keep the conversation going. Every client will be different and interviews are able to be flexible and adaptive (i.e., more like a structured but natural conversation than a formal interview).

Beginning the interview

The most important part of interview is setting up the interview to make the client feel as comfortable as possible, by creating conditions where the client feels clear about what the interview is for, what will happen next and that the physical environment feels safe (i.e., reduce noise and distractions if possible). This might look different for every person and also depends on where you meet (environment, who else is around). Some clients might like to know more about you to help establish a connection, so making time to chat can be helpful.

When introducing the more formal part of the interview, clearly stating the purpose is a good way to start. One possible script is:

“I am wanting to find out more about how things might have **changed** for you since you started with DARDY. We are going to use the iPad app to have a yarn about people, places and your goals to see how they might have changed.”

Sample questions

The following sections provide options for more ‘abstract’ questions – for instance, where a client is asked to reflect on their situation and perhaps the influence of the DARDY program – as well as more ‘concrete’ questions that focus on specific behaviours. As the interviewer, you can use your judgement to decide which type of questions works best, depending on the client and the stage of the interview. Sometimes it is good to start with the abstract question, followed by more concrete questions.

Change in relationships



People

<i>Abstract questions</i>	<i>Concrete questions...</i>	<i>...with follow up question</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What changes have you experienced in your life with your family and friends since DARDY? - Have you made any new friends since you started with DARDY? - Is there anyone you don't hang out with anymore? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who do you message or call on the phone? - Who do you spend the most time with? - Who helps you? - Who do you like? - Who do you care about most? - Who influences you? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is this different to when you first started with DARDY? - In what ways?

Places

<i>Abstract questions</i>	<i>Concrete questions...</i>	<i>...with follow up question</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has anything changed about the places you go to since you started with DARDY? - Are there any places where you want to spend more time? - Any places you want to spend less time? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where is somewhere you feel safe or comfortable? - Where do you go to feel you can be yourself? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are the places you like to hang out different now to when you first started with DARDY? - In what ways?

Increased access to disability and other support services



<i>Abstract questions</i>	<i>Concrete questions...</i>	<i>...with follow up question</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When you are feeling down who do you go to? - What about social workers, support workers or doctors? Is there anyone like that that you rely on? <p><i>Prompts</i> – mentors, case managers, case workers?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you tell me about any support services DARDY has helped you find? - Are there any other services or community organisations you go to? - What do you think has helped you the most? - What did they do? - What do you think you might need more help with? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What does this person do that you really appreciate? - In what ways do they help you the most? - Do you do anything fun with them? (if applicable)

DARDY support workers and lawyers

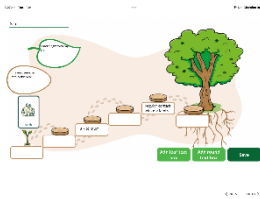


Go through these questions for both the DARDY social support worker and the DARDY lawyer

<i>Abstract questions</i>	<i>Concrete questions...</i>	<i>...with follow up question</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tell me about X* - How much has X* helped you through your time in court? - How much has X* helped you through your time in court? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I understand you've met with X*? - Did X* help you? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are they like? - What did they do for you? - What did you find was helpful? - How do they make you feel? - Do you feel like they listened to you? - How big a part have they played for you? - Is there anything you think they could have helped?

****Name of the DARDY lawyer or Social Support Worker***

Goals



The five pages – friends, family, employment/education, health, safety

<i>Abstract questions</i>	<i>Concrete questions...</i>	<i>...with follow up question</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What's been happening since you started with DARDY? - Do you feel better about yourself since you started with DARDY? - In what ways? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you have any new goals? - Are you more engaged at school? - What are you doing in your spare time that is different to before? - Are you feeling more confident than before? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How is this different to before DARDY? - Why do you think this has changed? - Can you tell me more about that?

DARDY Stakeholder interview guide

Legal Aid Western Australia

Purpose of the interview

To explore DARDY collaborators' experience of the DARDY project and their perspectives on the role of DARDY in:

- Legal and social outcomes for young people with cognitive disabilities
- Facilitating collaboration between the legal, disability and other support sectors.

The interviews will also investigate collaborators satisfaction with the DARDY project and their opinions about project strengths and suggested improvements.

Practicalities

- The interviews are planned to be of approximately 30 minutes duration.
- *Need to decide how collaborators will be invited for an interview (Helen)*
- A participant information form and consent form will be provided to participants agreeing to an interview prior to the interview taking place.
- The consent form can be returned by email or hardcopy before the interview commences.

Questions

1. Relationship to the DARDY project

- 1.1. Can you tell me what you know about the DARDY project and how it supports the work you do?

Prompts: What do you know about the DARDY project?

Can you tell me a little bit about your work relationship to the DARDY project?

How does the DARDY project support your work?

- 1.2. How well aligned are the values of your organisation to DARDY values and principles?

Prompts: Do you know what the DARDY values and principles are?

Does your organisation have values and principles that align with these?

Probes: Can you tell me more about that?

Can you give me an example?

- 1.3. What difference has DARDY made to the work you do with young people?

Prompts: How were things different for you and your organisation when DARDY was not involved?
What would it be like if DARDY were not involved now?

2. Your perspective of DARDY's role in positive client and family outcomes

- 2.1. From your perspective, do you think DARDY supports positive outcomes for clients and their families?
 - 2.1.1. Do you think DARDY increases client and family members **understanding of their legal situation**?
 - 2.1.2. Do you think DARDY results in better legal outcomes for young people?
 - 2.1.3. Does DARDY increase client and family members' **access to disability and other support services**?
 - 2.1.4. Does DARDY help young people trust services and supports?
 - 2.1.5. Does DARDY facilitate increased **positive connections** for young people?

Probes: Can you tell me more about that?
Can you give me an example?

3. The role of DARDY in facilitating collaborative relationships between the legal, disability and other support sectors

- 3.1. In your view, are collaborations between legal, disability and other support sectors valuable and needed? Why?
- 3.2. In what ways does DARDY support collaboration between the legal and disability sectors?
- 3.3. In what ways does DARDY support collaboration between the legal and other support sectors?

Probes: Can you tell me more about that?
Can you give me an example?

4. Satisfaction with the DARDY project, what works and what could work better

- 4.1. In your opinion, what works well about the DARDY project?

Prompts: Are there specific groups or circumstances where you think the DARDY project works the best?

4.2. What do you see as some of the limitations of the DARDY project?

Prompts: Are there specific groups or circumstances where you think the DARDY project doesn't work particularly well?

4.3. Do you feel that DARDY provides 'whole of person' or person-centred and respectful service?

4.4. Do you feel the service provided through DARDY is culturally safe?

4.5. How well do you think the DARDY project responds to the diversity of young people?

4.6. In your opinion, is the way DARDY services are provided strength-based?

4.7. In your opinion, how could the DARDY project be improved?

Prompts: Are there any things that the DARDY project does that you would like to see **more of**?

Are there any things that the DARDY project does that you would like to see **less of**?

Is there anything you think that the DARDY project could be doing differently?

Client No.:

Client needs help with:	Yes	No	Unsure	Client information	Collateral information	Suggested actions
A. Help to be safe						
A1. Housing						
A2. Physical health						
A3. Domestic violence situation						
A4. <i>Urgent</i> mental health						
A5. <i>Urgent</i> Drug and alcohol						
B. Help with my legal problems						
B1. Link to a lawyer						
B2. Legal supports (inc. bail support)						
C. Help to understand and engage with legal processes						
C1. Legal Education						
C2. Support at court						
D. Help with my body and behaviour						
D1. Formal disability assessment						
D2. Disability supports						
D3. Support to heal from past trauma						
D4. Mental health interventions (non-urgent)						
D5. Drug and alcohol interventions (non urgent)						
E. Help for family, carers and kin						
E1. Support for family and loved ones						
F. Help to connect to community						
F1. Recreation and interest connections						
F2. Education and training						
F3. Employment						
G. Help to connect to culture						
G1. Referrals to culturally focused services and organisations						

Dardy Client Intake form - *Continued*

Is client getting help from the following?	Yes	No	Unsure	Notes
H. Are you getting help from any of the following services?				
H1. NDIS				
H2. DCPFS				
H3. Corrections (youth/adult)				
H4. Community Mental Health				
H5. Substance abuse counselling				
H6. Other counselling				
H7. Crisls accomodation services				
H8. Homelessness services				
H9. Other - <i>Please specify in notes</i>				

I. Do you have a lawyer? *Please choose the appropriate response*

	Check	Notes
Ia. Yes - Grant of legal aid to a private lawyer		
Ib. Yes - Grant of legal aid to a LAWA lawyer		
Ic. Yes - Duty lawyer will continue to represent me		
Id. Yes - Community Legal Service (CLS)		
Ie. No - I need a lawyer		

Does the client understand the following?	Yes	No	Unsure	Notes
J. Legal knowledge and understanding				
J1. Do you understand your charges?				
J2. Do you understand the law?				
J3. Do you understand everyone's role in your legal situation?				

Disability information	Yes	No	Unsure	Notes
K. Have you been told the following?				
K1. You have a disability?				
K2. You have a learning disorder?				
K3. You have a mental illness?				

L. Disability diagnosis

L1. Has there been a disability diagnosis?

Is client getting help from the following?	Yes	No	Unsure	Notes
M. Family and kin - Who looks out for you?				
M1. Mum and/or dad				
M2. Other family				
M3. Informal carers				
M4. Formal carers				
M5. Other - <i>Please specify in notes</i>				

N. What connections do you have in the community?

N1. Do you have a job?

N2. Do you attend school/TAFE?

N3. Are you a member of a sports' team?

N4. Do you volunteer?

N5. Do you have hobbies?

N6. Do you have a mentor?

N7. Other - *Please specify in notes*

	Yes	No	Unsure	Specify
O. What cultural connections do you have?				
O1. Do you identify with a particular cultural identity?				
O2. Would you like to learn more about your culture?				
O3. Would you like to be more involved in your culture?				

Assistance provided to clients during DARDY (including referrals)	Yes	No	Unsure	Please describe (Including whether they progressed with referrals)	Notes
A. Emergency interventions for client safety					
A1. Housing					
A2. Physical health					
A3. Domestic violence situation					
A4. Urgent mental health					
A5. Urgent Drug and alcohol					
B. Help with my legal problems					
B1. Link to a lawyer					
B2. Sentencing outcome recorded					
C. Help to understand and engage with legal processes					
C1. Legal education provided					
C2. Support at court provided					
D. Help with my body and behaviour					
D1. Disability diagnosed					
D2. Obtained NDIS access					
D3. Improved NDIS supports					
D4. Obtained non-NDIS supports					
D5. Engaged in mental health interventions					
D6. Engaged in drug and alcohol interventions					
D7. Engaged in counselling					
E. Help for family, carers and kin					
E1. Support/referral provided to family, carer, or kin					
F. Help to connect to community					
F1. Engaged with recreation and interest connections					
F2. Engaged with education and training					
F3. Engaged with employment					
F4. Engaged with mentoring					
G. Help to connect to culture					
G1. Engaged in culturally focused organisation					
G2. Engaged with cultural activities					

Dardy Client Closure form - *Continued*

Does the client understand the following?	Yes	No	Unsure	Notes
J. Legal knowledge and understanding				
J1. Do you understand your charges?				
J2. Do you understand the law?				
J3. Do you understand everyone's role in your legal situation?				