
Managing Support and Safety Hubs

Tabled 27 May 2020



This audit looked at whether Support and Safety Hubs provide effective and efficient support for families and those affected by family violence. We found that hubs are not meeting their full potential to help people.

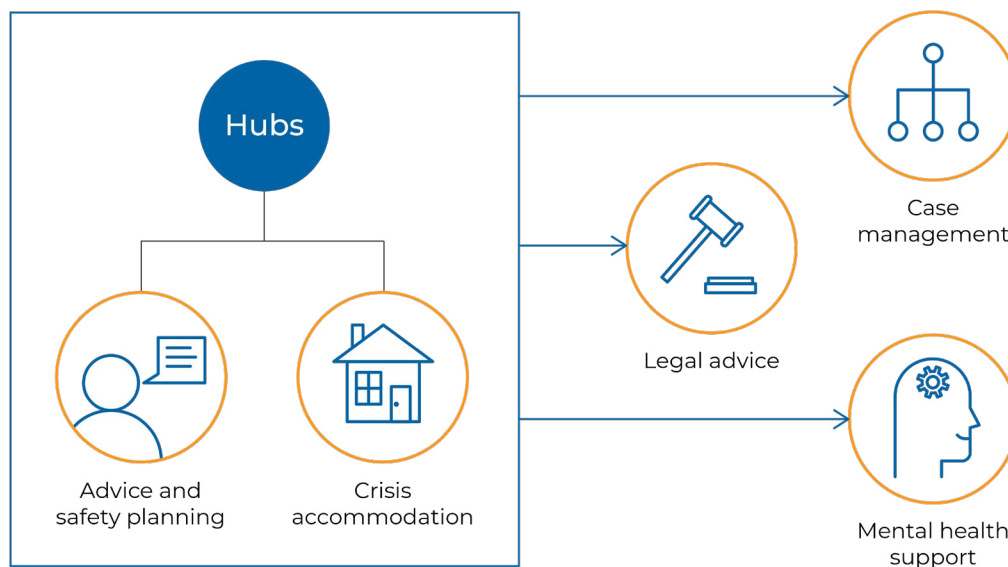
Context

In 2016, the Royal Commission into Family Violence highlighted that people impacted by family violence were not receiving the support and services they needed. It recommended that the government establish 17 Support and Safety Hubs across Victoria, now branded as the Orange Door.

People experiencing family violence or parents needing support to care for their children may need a range of services. Hubs are designed to coordinate this specialist support. This can cover providing advice and safety planning, organising crisis accommodation, or connecting them to other services such as case management, legal advice or mental health support. The government committed to opening all hubs by 2021, and provided \$448.1 million to do this. There are five hubs open so far, with the rest due to open by the end of 2022.

Community service organisations, or CSOs, from four sectors work in hubs, services for women and children affected by family violence, for perpetrators of family violence, for parents needing support to care for their children and for Aboriginal peoples. Working together in this way presents a big change for these organisations.

Family Safety Victoria, or FSV, designs and establishes hubs, supports their operations, and monitors and manages their performance. FSV is an office of the Department of Health and Human Services, or DHHS. DHHS oversees FSV and also directly funds and monitors the CSOs who work in the hubs. FSV, DHHS and CSOs are all partners in hubs.



Conclusion

Hubs are improving the way these agencies work together, but are not yet realising their full potential to help people. FSV did not plan the first five hubs in enough detail, meaning they weren't fully ready to help people when they opened, and for some time after that.

FSV also has not provided enough guidance to support hubs to operate consistently, and gaps in FSV's performance monitoring mean it does not know whether hubs are improving outcomes for people. These issues present a risk to the rollout of the remaining hubs.

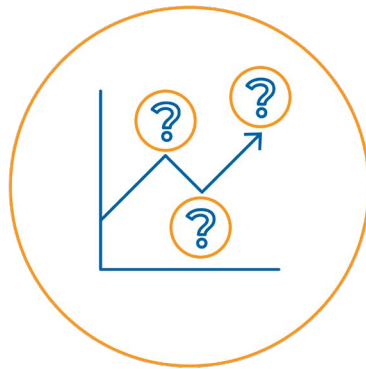
Findings 1

FSV rushed to meet the government's tight timelines for opening the first five hubs. Subsequent lack of detailed planning meant hubs opened without all the necessary work spaces, technology and staff they needed.

FSV's analysis of other service models showed that these issues were likely to impact hubs, but its advice to government downplayed these risks.

Findings 2

Hub partners have worked hard to get hubs established, but FSV has not provided enough support to make sure they operate consistently. For example, it lacks statewide procedures, detailed guidance and service standards, training for how practitioners should work together to support clients, and to support Aboriginal cultural safety, or a common tool for assessing wellbeing risks in children.



Findings 3

Gaps in FSV's hub performance monitoring mean it cannot show whether hubs are leading to better outcomes for people. It has not completed a performance framework, meaning:

- it has not defined success, or developed the measures and targets needed to monitor hub performance
- it is missing some of the data needed to monitor hub performance, including who hubs are helping, the timeliness of help, and what happens once people leave hubs to receive other services
- it has not defined how the multiple statewide governance groups are responsible for monitoring hub performance.

All these findings combined have led to client backlogs in most hubs. As a result, some people have waited months to receive support. FSV also doesn't know whether people are receiving the same quality and level of support across hubs, or whether the support they receive is influenced more by which hub they access than by their needs.

FSV has improved its approach for establishing hubs. For example, it has introduced a minimum 80 per cent staffing level for new hubs before they can open. However, with 12 hubs still to open in less than three years, and better support needed for the open hubs, there is a risk that FSV may again launch hubs that are not fully prepared to support people in need.

Recommendations

We made nine recommendations to DHHS to improve hubs' performance, including for detailed planning, additional guidance and training, a stronger focus on children and better performance monitoring.

For further information, please see the full report on our website, www.audit.vic.gov.au.