Well-being Worker Role Framework

# 1. Purpose of the Role

The Well-being Worker (WW) role is designed to provide therapeutic and emotional support to young people facing challenges related to mental health, substance use, trauma, and life circumstances. The role bridges a critical gap between overstretched clinical services and youth work practice by embedding a therapeutic presence directly within youth services. It offers a flexible, stigma-free, and youth-friendly model of support grounded in both professional therapeutic training and youth work values.

This framework supports services to implement the role in a way that protects the integrity of the model while allowing for local adaptation.

# 2. Core Principles

The Well-being Worker role must be grounded in the following values:

* **Youth Work Ethos:** Voluntary engagement, empowerment, participation, and respect for young people’s agency
* **Trauma-Informed Practice:** Safety, trust, collaboration, choice, and empowerment
* **Relational Approach:** Deep, trust-based relationships are foundational to therapeutic engagement
* **Accessibility:** Support offered in familiar, youth-led settings to reduce stigma and barriers
* **Flexibility:** Responsive to young people’s needs, pace, and readiness to engage
* **Embeddedness:** Integrated within youth services rather than external or stand-alone
* **Distinct but Complementary:** Provides therapeutic input while working alongside, not replacing, youth workers

**Minimum Requirements and Essential Attributes for the Worker**

* Level 8 qualification in a therapeutic discipline (e.g., counselling, addiction counselling, psychotherapy, psychology, mental health nursing)
* At least two years’ experience working therapeutically with young people , preferably in a youth work or community setting
* Demonstrated ability to work with young people from marginalised or trauma-affected backgrounds
* Good knowledge of issues related to addiction, substance misuse and mental health
* Strong inter-personal and relational skills (e.g., empathy, emotional intelligence, active listening)
* Ability to build trust quickly and work without judgment
* Understanding of and alignment with youth work principles
* Experience working flexibly in non-clinical, community settings
* Capacity to work both independently and collaboratively with youth work teams.

**Desirable Skills and Attributes for the Worker:**

* Experience in group facilitation
* Full driving licence

# 4. Key Functions

* Provide individual therapeutic support to young people aged 15+
* Co-develop individualised support plans with young people
* Offer informal pre-engagement meetings to build trust
* Deliver group-based workshops or activities where appropriate
* Engage in drop-ins, community events, and informal youth project life to build visibility and connection
* Work closely with youth workers to provide wraparound support
* Make onward referrals where appropriate, in consultation with youth workers
* Maintain clear, trauma-informed records using agreed systems
* Attend external clinical supervision and internal project supervision

# 5. Working Approach

**Role Name:** The role name is key to removing stigma and barriers to accessing therapeutic support. While the worker must be a qualified therapeutic worker, the Well-being worker name is key to accessibility.

**Pre-Engagement:** Young people should have the option of an informal meeting before committing to sessions. This supports agency, reduces anxiety, and allows for relational trust to develop naturally.

**Flexible Engagement:** Sessions should be adaptable to meet young people where they are—physically, emotionally, and psychologically. Options include walk-and-talks, off-site meetings, and responsive scheduling.

**No Time Limits:** There should be no fixed number of sessions. The standing offer of support allows young people to disengage and return as needed, reducing pressure and increasing safety.

**Visibility and Informal Presence:** The WW should maintain regular, informal presence within youth projects. Visibility in group activities, events, or drop-in settings increases awareness and helps normalise therapeutic support.

**Group Work and Outreach:** Where engagement is low, or where group-based needs arise (e.g., grief, harm reduction), the WW can offer group sessions, workshops, or attend community events to build relationships and trust.

**Ethical Engagement with Young People Under the Influence:** Therapeutic work should not proceed when a young person is under the influence. However, this does not mean disengagement. The WW should maintain a presence, offer relational connection, and ensure the young person feels respected and supported.

**Referral Boundaries:** Where therapeutic needs exceed the scope of the WW, a referral pathway should be in place—developed collaboratively with youth workers. This ensures continuity and avoids over-reliance on a single practitioner.

# 6. Process Overview: How the Role Functions in Practice

To ensure consistency and clarity, this section outlines the typical process by which a young person accesses support from the WW.

**Step 1: Identification**

* A youth worker identifies that a young person may benefit from engaging with the WW. This is usually based on their knowledge of the young person’s needs, emotional state, or changes in behaviour.

**Step 2: Introduction and Consent**

* The youth worker introduces the idea to the young person in an informal way. Emphasis is placed on the voluntary nature of the engagement.
* If the young person expresses interest, they are offered an informal, no-pressure pre-engagement meeting with the WW.

**Step 3: Pre-Engagement Meeting**

* This meeting takes place in a youth-friendly, familiar environment. It is a space for the young person to meet the WW, ask questions, and get a sense of the process before deciding whether to continue.

**Step 4: Ongoing Therapeutic Work**

* If the young person chooses to proceed, regular one-to-one sessions are arranged. The frequency and format are flexible and always based on the young person’s preferences and availability.
* The youth worker remains part of the support network, providing continuity and support between sessions if needed.

**Step 5: Flexibility and Exit**

* The young person can pause or end sessions at any time. They are informed that they can return later without judgment.
* If the WW is not the best fit, the young person can be supported to access alternative services.

This process ensures that the role is introduced and delivered in a youth-centred, ethical, and non-intrusive way, supported by the trust already present between the young person and their youth worker.

# 7. Role Within the Youth Project Team

The WW is not a substitute for youth work, but a complementary role that enhances the overall wraparound support offered by the team. Key elements include:

* Joint planning and case reflection with youth workers
* Participation in team meetings (where appropriate)
* Clarity on boundaries and confidentiality
* Shared understanding of referral processes and follow-up

While the Project Manager of each project will manage the WW’s work in that organisation, the project’s Drug and Alcohol Worker will also act as a secondary point of contact for the WW within each project team.

Youth workers are often the bridge to therapeutic engagement. Their insight and relational trust with young people must be respected and utilised in all aspects of the WW role.

# 8. Implementation Considerations

**Service-Level Alignment:** Where the role is implemented across multiple sites, shared induction, supervision structures, clear communication and a unified vision for the role are essential to consistency and impact.

**Introduction to the Project:**

* Start with informal engagement: attend events, introduce the role slowly
* Youth workers should be briefed and supported to introduce the WW to young people
* Include posters or social media updates to raise awareness

**Balancing One-to-One and Group Work:**

* One-to-one sessions remain core, but group work is a strategic tool for engagement
* Services should allow time for the WW to attend community events and offer workshops

**Scheduling and Time Use:**

* Clearly agree how the WW’s time will be spent when one-to-one sessions are not booked (e.g., visibility work, group facilitation, resource development)

# 9. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

**Ongoing Evaluation Should Include:**

* Number of one-to-one sessions, group activities, and outreach engagements
* Qualitative feedback from young people, youth workers, and the WW
* Themes arising from clinical supervision (anonymised)
* Changes in how young people use the service (e.g., return rates, self-referrals)

**Suggested Evaluation Tools:**

* Feedback forms (designed with young people)
* Case reflections (with youth workers)
* Session logs (light-touch)
* End-of-year interviews or focus groups

# 10. Professional Development and Supervision

* Monthly external clinical supervision is essential
* Monthly supervision and support sessions with CCRAS Team Leader
* Quarterly support or check-ins with project managers
* Quarterly collective reviews with all involved services (if cross-site)
* Access to CPD on trauma, addiction, intersectionality, group and youth work

# 11. Key Messages

The WW role fills a critical therapeutic gap within youth work settings, especially for young people facing complex challenges who are unlikely to access or benefit from traditional services. Its success relies not only on the qualifications of the worker, but on the approach taken: Embedded, therapeutic, youth-friendly, flexible and relational.

This framework should be used alongside internal service discussions to adapt the role to the local context while staying true to its core values and learning from the CCRAS pilot evaluation.