



Berry Street's Therapeutic Life Story Work Services

Endorsed by Professor Richard Rose,
Director of Therapeutic Life Story
Work International

**BERRY
STREET**

Believing In
Children,
Young People,
Families &
Their Future.



TLSWi

What is Therapeutic Life Story Work?

Therapeutic Life Story Work (TLSW) enables children and young people who have experienced the trauma of child abuse and neglect to understand and express how their past experiences have impacted their current thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

The evidence-based program supports young people to reflect on their past, develop compassion for themselves and move on to achieve their full potential.

The program was developed by international child trauma expert Professor Richard Rose and has been used worldwide since 1997.

“Quite often, children in care have not had the opportunity to hear their stories, to share memories with those close to them or to make sense of who they are.”

– Professor Richard Rose (2017), Director of Therapeutic Life Story Work International (TLSWi) and Honorary Associate of Berry Street



Berry Street and TLSW

Berry Street is proud to partner with Professor Rose to offer Therapeutic Life Story Work, More About Me and All About Me. We recognise the powerful impact TLSW has on the recovery of young people who have experienced trauma, abuse or neglect.

We provide:

- › **Training:** In 2016, we delivered the first Australian Professional Diploma in Therapeutic Life Story Work. Since then, we've supported more than 300 practitioners to complete the diploma both in-person and online.
- › **Fee-for-service:** In 2022, we began offering TLSW on a fee-for-service basis. An accredited Berry Street TLSW practitioner works triadically with the young person and their carer to undertake the intervention. All Berry Street TLSW practitioners hold a minimum of a Bachelor of Social Work or relevant discipline and have completed the Professional Diploma in Therapeutic Life Story Work.

To arrange a free consultation, please email: tlswenquiries@berrystreet.org.au

Benefits of TLSW

By engaging with Therapeutic Life Story Work, the child or young person has access to therapeutic support that is tailored to them to address the impact of childhood trauma.

Throughout the intervention, the Berry Street TLSW practitioner will support the young person to develop:

- › positive sense of identity and understanding of culture
- › enhanced recognition and mastery of emotional regulation and language
- › stronger relationships and attachment with the adults in their lives
- › enhanced ability to regulate stress and in turn develop resilience
- › meaning of their life story in relation to their past, present, and positive projections into the future.
- › coherent narrative of certain events that have taken place that pose questions or challenges to them

The carer will also be supported to develop empathy and compassion towards the child, young person, and their family.

All About Me

All About Me takes place over six sessions where the practitioner will work alongside the carer and child or young person in developing trust and connection, all whilst getting to know each other.

The primary focus of All About Me is to understand the child or young person from their perspective and identify their future goals and aspirations.

Once completed, the TLSW practitioner will assess where the child or young person is at and make any recommendations around future goals and planning. All children partaking in More About Me or Therapeutic Life Story Work will complete All About Me.

More About Me

More About Me takes place over 10-12 sessions and is tailored to suit the child or young person's where they are at.

More About Me is carried out between the child or young person, their primary carer and the TLSW practitioner.

More About Me enables children and young people who may be experiencing a challenge in their life, such as a placement change or case planning, to process and develop greater understanding in order to move on.

This approach is based on the child or young person's history, although greater emphasis is on their present and future.

Therapeutic Life Story Work

Therapeutic Life Story Work (TLSW) is the original Richard Rose (2012) model, founded on the triadic relationship between the child or young person, their primary carer and the TLSW practitioner.

Therapeutic Life Story Work enables children and young people who have experienced the trauma of child abuse and neglect and are struggling with the pain of their past to reflect, develop compassion for themselves and move on.

It is a defined approach, designed to introduce the past as markers for the present. Once these are understood, the child is supported in considering how to move on to make significant changes, as a result of a far deeper understanding and awareness of how their history has been negatively impacting on their present.

Targeted Intervention

The Therapeutic Life Story Work program may not be appropriate for all children and young people due to their individual circumstances. Therefore, Targeted Intervention is available for children and young people who require individualised therapeutic support. By tailoring the therapeutic intervention to the child or young person's needs, they are provided the opportunity to engage in and explore their life story.

Targeted interventions adopt the Rose (2012) model to support children, young people and their families to overcome emotional or behavioural challenges.

Therapeutic Life Story Work has supported me to work with the child to be more mindful, inquisitive and understanding of his early childhood experiences...What made TLSW effective was that it was done in conjunction with his carer, who was sensitive, and offered acceptance and understanding throughout the process."

– TLSW Practitioner, Ballarat



The Therapeutic Life Story Work program was much better, more valuable and had a bigger impact on me than I was expecting, and I expect the same is true for the young person in my care. This is probably the most beneficial program my foster child and I have ever done."

– Foster carer



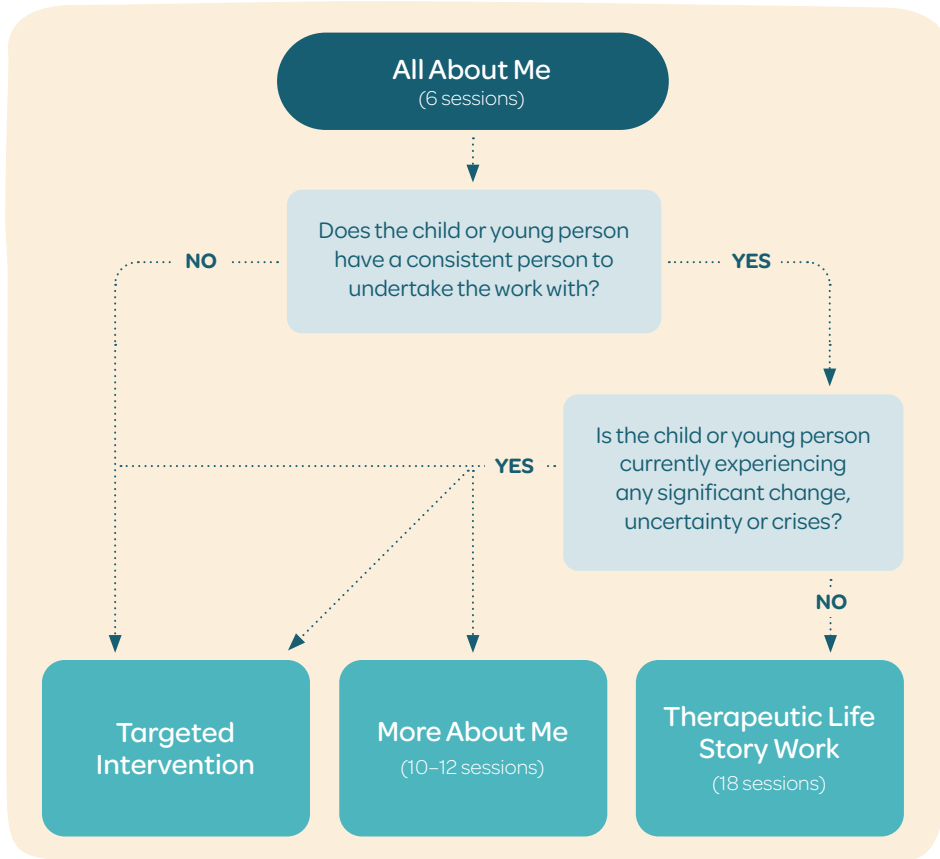
How TLSW Works

Berry Street offers Therapeutic Life Story Work, More About Me and All About Me.

All About Me is the entry point into Life Story Work; all children and young people complete All About Me to assess their readiness for the intervention.

Following consultation, the TLSW practitioner makes a recommendation for the young person to undertake either More About Me, Therapeutic Life Story Work or a Targeted Intervention.

All sessions are offered at a Berry Street office, in the child or young person's home, or chosen safe space.



Intervention stages

The TLSW practitioner works closely with the young person and their carer to complete each stage of the intervention.

1. Information Bank

The TLSW practitioner gathers the child or young person's historical information to create a coherent narrative of their life. This includes reviewing child protection files and interviewing significant people, such as their former and current carers, case managers and so on.

2. Direct Sessional Work (Internalisation)

Using specific intervention tools that are tailored to the child or young person's age and stage of development, the child or young person is guided to think about who they are and who they want to be.

The child or young person will be supported to externalise their thoughts, feelings and emotions safely, which is then recorded on paper.

3. Life Story Book

The child or young person's therapeutic life story work will be collated into their own personalised 'Life Story Book'.

The 'Life Story Book' represents the closure of the child or young person's TLSW journey. This final piece is vital in the child or young person valuing and taking ownership of their life story and further strengthening their view of self and the world around them.



Michael's Life Story

Michael* experienced significant trauma and neglect as a child and was unable to remain living safely at home. From the ages of three to 13, Michael lived in 19 different foster, kinship and residential care homes.

In March 2020, Michael went to live with Berry Street foster carer Carol* and her family. After 18 months with Carol, Michael was continuing to have difficulty in expressing and regulating his emotions. He was also being verbally and physically aggressive in the home and at school and rarely sought comfort or connection from his carers.

Michael's case manager consulted with Berry Street about his behaviours and his care team agreed that Therapeutic Life Story Work (TLSW) could benefit him by:

- › helping to strengthen Michael's attachment to his carers;
- › developing his capacity to express and regulate emotions; and,
- › most importantly, understanding his early life experiences.

Berry Street's TLSW practitioner met with Michael and explained that the aim of TLSW was to find out more information about his life, why things had happened to him and why decisions had been made for him. Michael didn't understand a lot about his past, so he was keen to 'give it a go'.



Information Gathering

The TLSW practitioner began by reviewing Michael's files and psychological assessments, and contacting his relatives, previous carers, child protection, foster care agencies and so on.

Michael's past carers expressed feeling "burnt out" and not equipped to understand or respond to Michael's behaviours.

This extensive bank of information would be vital in supporting Michael to understand his thoughts, feelings and behaviours in the context of what he had experienced.

Direct Sessional Work

Berry Street's TLSW practitioner, Carol and Michael developed a contract to ensure the sessions would be safe and confidential. Michael was assured that if things got too hard to talk about, he could stop at any time.

The TLSW practitioner met with Carol and Michael every fortnight for nine months, while they worked through Michael's life story. The initial six sessions focused on building Michael's feelings of trust and safety.

By using therapeutic intervention tools and activities that were specific to Michael's age and stage of development, the TLSW practitioner was able to sensitively explore challenging topics. As the TLSW progressed, Michael, Carol and the practitioner recorded what they discussed on a roll of butcher's paper in colourful markers.

"As we mapped Michael's life story, I became aware of the big gaps of missing information in Michael's life.

We found out that most of Michael's placements ended when someone came to his school without warning and told him he wouldn't be going back to his carers that night, but to a new home.

Understandably, this created an environment where Michael was unable to feel secure with foster carers. Through the TLSW process, Michael began to understand that the foster home moves were generally for circumstances outside of his control and that he had no influence over."

– Carol, Michael's carer

Life Story Book Development and Closure

At the end of the Therapeutic Life Story Work process, Michael, Carol and the TLSW practitioner had a much better understanding of what had happened in Michael's life.

Michael received his life story as a beautiful, personalised book – a meaningful record of his lived experience and a testament to his hard work and perseverance throughout the program.

*Names have been changed in the interest of privacy. The models and volunteers pictured are not connected to the case studies.



Berry Street acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands, skies and waterways across Australia. We recognise that we operate on stolen land and that sovereignty was never ceded. We are committed to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in our care to connect to their cultures, countries and communities.



Berry Street is committed to the principles of social justice. Berry Street supports the LGBTQIA+ community and celebrates diversity.