The Attributes of Health Justice Partnership: executive summary

The Attributes of Health Justice Partnership identifies the core attributes of effective health justice partnership (HJP). More specifically, it introduces the Attributes of HJP framework, which describes the characteristics that define this way of working. It provides a shared foundation for understanding what enables effective collaboration while recognising that partnerships operate in different contexts and take different forms.

Across Australia, individuals, families and communities are experiencing increasingly interconnected challenges that affect health, justice and wellbeing. Rising costs of living, insecure housing, discrimination, violence and poor health outcomes rarely occur in isolation. They interact and compound, shaping people's ability to participate in society, maintain health and wellbeing, and access support when they need it.

Yet the systems intended to support people are often organised around institutions, funding streams and professional boundaries rather than the realities of people's lives. While individual services may be highly effective, no single service, sector or profession can respond to the full complexity of interconnected need. HJP approaches bring legal assistance into health, social and community care settings to support more coordinated, person-centred responses to those needs.

While HJPs continue to grow across Australia, there has been limited understanding of the core attributes that underpin effective partnership practice across different settings. This report addresses that gap by identifying the foundational and functional attributes that characterise HJP, while recognising that partnerships must adapt to the communities, services and people they support. The framework provides a practical foundation for planning, strengthening, evaluating and researching HJPs, and contributes to a stronger evidence base for collaboration across health, legal and community sectors.

The report draws on Health Justice Australia's foundational research on the health justice landscape, literature on HJP and cross-sector collaboration, published HJP evaluations, and interviews with 28 legal and health practitioners from 11 health justice partnerships across New South Wales and Victoria.

Key findings

- The research identified 12 attributes of effective health justice partnership that sit across five domains: legal help through health or social care; alignment; enabling environment; joint effort; and enhanced services. (You can find these over the page).
- The attributes include both the foundations that enable HJP, such as aligned goals, organisational support and resourcing, and the shared work of partnership, including building trust, cross-sector learning, identifying legal need and coordinating responses.
- While all HJPs in the study demonstrated these attributes, the way they were expressed varied considerably across settings, client groups and service models.

Insights

The research found that effective health justice partnership relies on more than co-location or referral pathways. It depends on relationships, shared learning, governance, organisational support and workforce capability that enable services to work together effectively over time. The framework demonstrates that these attributes are fundamental to HJP, while also showing that variation within them is both expected and necessary. Rather than a single model, HJP is a flexible approach that can be adapted to different communities, settings and needs while maintaining its core characteristics.

Future phases of the Evidence in Partnership project will examine how these attributes contribute to outcomes for clients, practitioners and partnering services, and explore what works, for whom and in what circumstances. The framework will also support ongoing learning about the conditions that help collaboration succeed across different contexts.

Read the full paper at **bit.ly/evidenceinpartnership**

Attributes of HJP

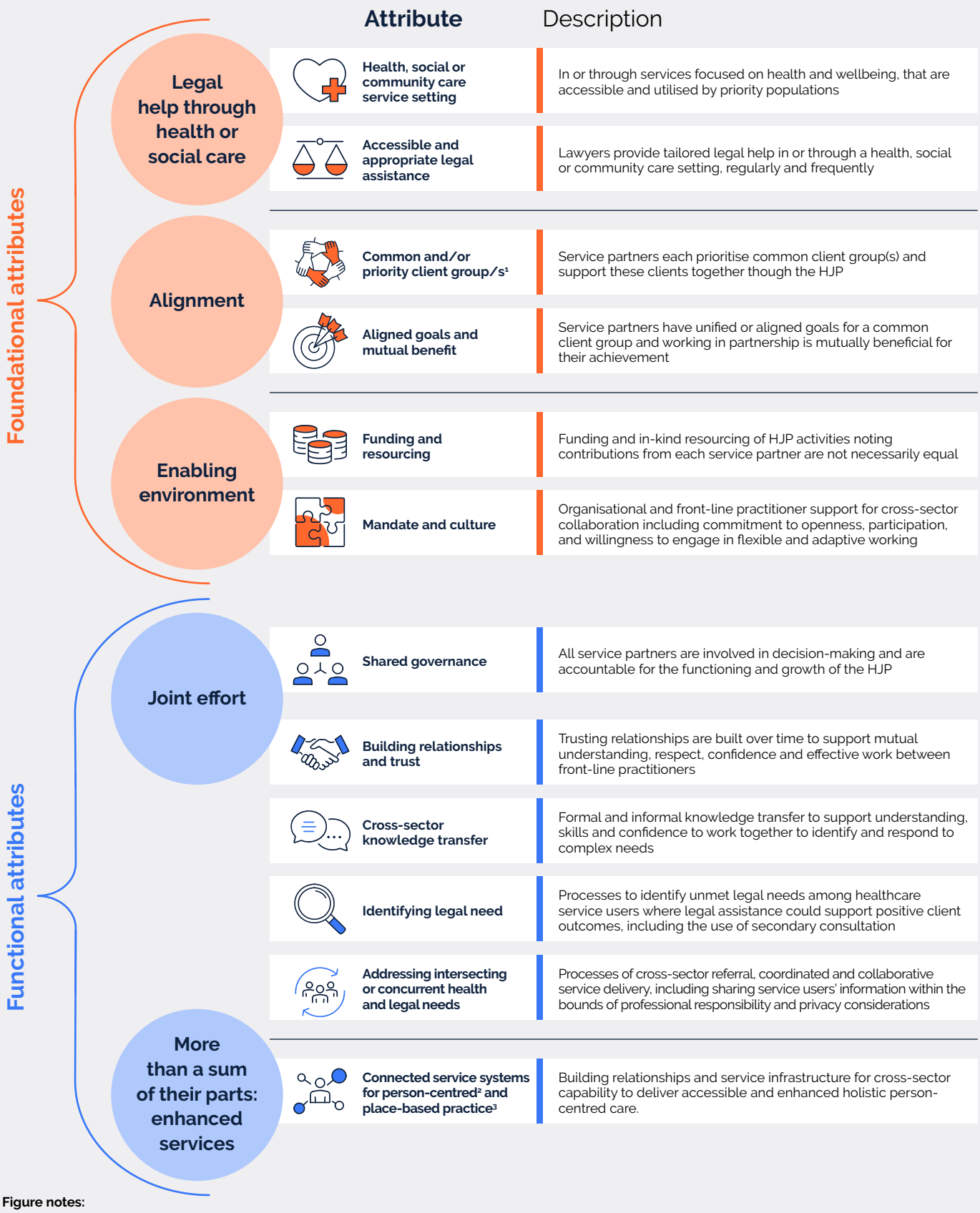


Figure notes:

1. HJP client groups typically consist of people with unmet legal needs that impact their health and wellbeing and who face multiple barriers to accessing and engaging with legal help. Barriers can include: limited financial resources; limited or fluctuating personal capability to act, resulting from issues including mental or physical health conditions that affect resilience, motivation and capacity; a limited understanding about legal issues, their seriousness or the opportunity for resolution; systemic inequities; a lack of guidance to and through legal pathways; and the high legal capability (skills, knowledge, trust, confidence) needed to access and use the legal system (Pleasence et al., 2014; Forell & Nagy, 2019)
2. Person-centred practice is defined for the purpose of this Framework as an approach to delivering services and care in an HJP in which the needs and priorities of the patient-client guide cross-sector processes, service delivery and decision making.
3. Place-based services are defined as services that are tailored and targeted to the specific circumstances of a community and place to respond to complex issues that are not well addressed with universal approaches. Place-based services also actively engage community members in service design. They are also outcomes focused and encourage flexibility in how outcomes are achieved.

Drabarek et al, 2025 *The attributes of health justice partnership: A conceptual framework.*