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# Help for 'damaged' children

**DAMIEN BROWN**

YOUNG Tasmanians who have endured trauma, neglect or abuse now have greater access to services that may help prevent potentially harmful mental disorders later in life.

The Australian Childhood Foundation's new Statewide Therapeutic Intervention Service centre in Hobart was officially opened yesterday by Human Services Minister Lin Thorp.

The centre aims to offer improved specialist assessments and therapies for children and young people who have been involved in the child protection system.

It also will provide better access to professional assessments and tailored

therapeutic interventions, with young people in rostered care being a priority group.

Ms Thorp said the new service was developing a body of knowledge on the complex needs of children and young people who were damaged as a consequence of abuse and family violence.

But she acknowledged that though a major reform of disability, child, youth and family services was under way, it would be some time before the changes came into effect.

ACF chief executive officer Joe Tucci said that while the new service had its Tasmanian base in Hobart, additional counsellors would be working in the North and North-West of the state.

"The Child Trauma Service will work together and collaboratively with statutory child protection services, police, juvenile justice and other support services to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people," Dr Tucci said.

He said the latest research had found experiences of abuse and family violence changed the structure and functioning of children's brains.

"Children become hypersensitive to any sense of threat or change, they find it difficult to trust, they find it difficult to calm down when they become distressed, worried or agitated," he said.

"Children's memory is affected and they find it harder to learn at school."