



Department for Child Protection Role Clarity

Delivering child safety and family support services

The purpose of this document is to provide greater clarity about the breadth of the Department's role in light of the transfer of universal services to the Department for Communities and the change of name to the Department for Child Protection. The paper has been developed to guide discussion within the Department and with partner agencies.

Mandate (Cabinet endorsed response to the Ford Review)

Secondary and tertiary level services, identifying and supporting children and young people, in the context of their families and communities.

The Department's mission (Minister endorsed)

Provide for the protection and care for children and young people and support at-risk individuals and families in resolving crises.

Department services

- 1 Supporting young people and children in care of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).
- 2 Protecting young people and children from abuse.
- 3 Supporting individuals and families at risk or in crisis.

The name of the department has the effect of indicating the primacy of the child protection roles in services 1 and 2; and second, interpreting child protection broadly to encompass service 3, individual and family support.

Individual and family support

While the department's responsibility for children in care and child protection services is clear, the individual and family support service has potential to be unclear due to:

- The name of the department being misinterpreted to exclude service 3, individual and family support,
- An erroneous expectation that other agencies will now assume welfare responsibilities that they have not had transferred to them,
- Unrealistic and open-ended expectations to address community problems being placed on the Department,
- Effective responses to the issues addressed through these secondary services are optimally and necessarily a shared responsibility across government agencies,
- Family support being a strategy to achieve protection of children, and
- The reality that the provision of individual and family support can compete for priority with urgent and more forensic child protection services.

Therefore, while the Department has a clear responsibility for individual and family support services, the role will vary with the issue, the other resources that can be engaged and the immediacy of the response that is necessary.

The Department's role may need to be clarified internally and with other agencies in the given circumstances. It will vary between:

- Delivering a crisis response to individuals and families,
- Providing support to families to prevent more serious risk to children,
- Collaborating in a multi-faceted or broader strategy for families and/or communities, or
- Leading a multi-faceted or broader strategy.

Issues and departmental strategies for collaborating across government

Collaborative approaches are necessary in relation to a variety of issues and for effective delivery of various child safety and family support services.

Key Issues	Other Key (and <u>Lead</u>) Agencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness • Welfare needs of juvenile justice clients • Financial support • Unruly neighbours • Young people with borderline disability • Truancy • Anti social behaviour by children and teens • Domestic violence • Drug abuse • Mental health • Indigenous community issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Housing and Works • <u>Department of Corrective Services</u> • Local charities • <u>Western Australia Police</u> • Disability Services Commission • <u>Department of Education and Training</u> • <u>Western Australia Police</u>, Department of Corrective Services, NGOs, Local Government • Western Australia Police , Department for Communities • <u>Drug and Alcohol Office</u> • <u>Department of Health Mental Health Division</u> • <u>Department of Indigenous Affairs</u>, Department of Health Office of Aboriginal Health, Department of Housing and Works, Department of Education and Training, Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

Child Safety Directors Group can provide whole of government leadership, agenda setting and problem solving.

Regional management groups (with the child safety mandate) can provide local leadership, co-ordination and shared action.

- Agency representatives may need strategic direction as to who takes the local lead on various issues.
- The Department needs to be clear and appropriately strategic about its role – provider of specific crisis responses, always a responsive collaborator and sometimes leader of broader multi agency strategies.

Child protection reciprocal protocols between The Department and key agencies are being reviewed and revised as necessary.

- New protocols to be completed with Drug and Alcohol Office, Mental Health Division and King Edward Memorial Hospital (as part of Department of Health).

Memoranda of Understanding at the local service delivery level are to be established with key services managing issues that impact on departmental core business. To cover referral, liaison and consultation.

- Drug and alcohol services
- Mental health services
- Department of Housing and Works