

*Care for Children and Young People  
Strategic Framework*

*December 2002 – June 2005*



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## Preamble

This document is a description of a strategic framework for services in the care for children area. The best interests of children are the central concern throughout. To achieve positive results for children the intention is to plan, enhance and build support structures through the engagement and partnership of key stakeholders in the process. This partnership is one between children, families and the community with the various organisations which support this area, which include:

Department for Community Development

Western Australian Council of Social Service (and the many not-for-profit organisations which work in this area)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Foster Care Association, and foster carers

CREATE Foundation

Children Youth and Family Agencies Association (CYFAA)

Youth Affairs Council of WA

Ethnic Communities Council

West Australian Indigenous Child Care Agencies Council (WAICCAC)

Children and Young People in Care Advisory Committee (CYPCAC)

In addition there is a broad range of state and Commonwealth government departments, particularly those with responsibilities in the area of 'human services', which are natural participants in such a partnership, but are too numerous to record here.

In developing this framework it is recognised that there are broader governmental strategies which must underpin any future directions in this area. In particular these include the agreements which identify ways in which the government and the Aboriginal community should work together. Two such significant agreements are those between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Commission (ATSIC) and the State Government known as the Statement of Commitment, and the COAG National Framework for Advancing the Aboriginal Reconciliation Process.

It is also recognised that there is a wide cultural diversity within the West Australian community which must be acknowledged and respected in the development of policies, and in work practice.

## Implementation

The custodian of the plan will be the Assistant Executive Director Program and Sector Development within the Department for Community Development. The custodian will periodically update the plan, ensure community development principles are appropriately applied, and direct that all tasks are assigned using appropriate project planning methodology. The custodian will establish a committee, including representation from the Children and Young People in Care Advisory Committee and CYFAA and CREATE, to monitor progress of key components of the plan.

Many of the initiatives proposed in this plan are likely to require additional resources (or a redirection of existing resources). It is intended that these costs will be dealt with on an individual basis as the details emerge. This strategic framework will be used as a starting point to identify initiatives which are expected to have resource implications, and to predict the interplay between different initiatives which have a mutual impact on each other. This can occur both for discussions internal to the Department and in broader negotiations. It may be appropriate to build an assessment of current and future resource implications into the annual reviews of the framework.

There will be ongoing monitoring during 2002-05 of the progress of the planned key achievements. In particular there will be scrutiny of performance indicators of the success of efforts in keeping the number of children in care to a minimum. In 2005 an assessment will be made of the value of this strategic framework (this may include independent evaluation of outcomes if appropriate) and arrangements made for a new plan.

# 1. Introduction And Background

## 1.1 Introduction

Care for children is a major responsibility of the Department for Community Development, not-for-profit organisations and the community through the contribution of foster carers. It is a challenging area in which performance is stringently judged by the community. Consequently the Department regularly updates and revises plans and policies for this area.

This document initiates a strategic framework for care for children and young people for the 2002-05 period. It articulates the principles of a strategic framework for the care for children area, identifies the main decisions which need to be made and the key areas for action, and outlines a timetable for their subsequent implementation.

### Outcomes

This framework will play a major role in ensuring that the following outcomes are a priority in the ongoing development of services:

- The Department for Community Development will work in partnership with not-for-profit organisations, the community and other government departments to provide the best possible support and services to children in care. The framework provides a clear direction for the development of services plus the opportunity to incorporate the views of stakeholders and review goals annually in order to respond to changing circumstances.
- The number of children in care will be kept to the minimum consistent with the provision of safe living environments for children and the principle that children are best cared for by their families. The number of children in care has risen significantly since 1998 through circumstances beyond the direct control of service providers; the framework coordinates and prioritises efforts to keep the number of children in care at a minimum level.
- The Department aims, in the first instant, to reduce the annual level of growth to 8% by 2004/05.
- The quality of care for children will improve. While in care children have the right to be safe and receive quality care; the framework emphasises the need to continue efforts to improve the levels of support provided to children.

- The transition from care will be managed in a planned and supported fashion. The framework highlights the need to further develop this aspect of care for children services in line with the increasing awareness of its importance.
- The resources available for care services will be used in a cost effective and efficient manner. The framework identifies improvements to the management systems which support services to enhance quality and efficiency.
- The views of children and young people will be incorporated into policy and service delivery. This outcome reflects the current commitment to give significant weight to the views of children and young people.

A strategic framework summarises key issues in a single document and proposes a conceptual basis for planning, decision making and action. It is useful in enhancing the coherence and effectiveness of activities across the care for children sector with the aim of providing better services for children and families. The document will also serve as a basis for discussion about further policy directions concerning children in care.

The Department works in partnership with the not-for-profit sector and the community to achieve positive results for children in care. An essential element of the strategic framework is the recognition that there must be a shared understanding of the principles and goals across sectors. Many of the individual initiatives discussed herein are based on partnership between the Department and the not-for-profit sector, and this document has been developed through extensive consultation. The strategic framework has also been reviewed by the Children and Young People in Care Advisory Committee to the Director General of the Department for Community Development.

There have been various recent developments which have stimulated the creation of this strategic framework. The most significant of these has been the creation of the new Department for Community Development. In establishing the new Department the Government has sought to move from a narrow focus on statutory and safety net issues to a broader strategy of building the capacity and individual strengths of individuals and families, and enabling community solutions to problems. The vision and principles of this new strategy are described in Section 2.

Other recent developments that prompted the writing of this strategic framework were:

- A significant rise in the number of children in care in recent years, particularly since 1998. Although the rate per 1000 children in WA is still relatively low compared to other jurisdictions, the increase in the total number of children in care of more than 10% each year has put pressure on care for children services and has raised overall expenditure. The rise in numbers of Indigenous children has been particularly notable over this period. Analysis has shown that the increase in the number of children in care is due to both children staying longer in care and growth in the numbers entering care. Children currently in care, and their families, are generally perceived as exhibiting more complex problems than in the past. Children are tending to enter care at a younger age and which is linked to longer periods of care. There has been a general rise in numbers of children in care across Australia, so the issue is not just confined to West Australian conditions.
- The Department has continued to review its care for children funding levels with the Department of Treasury and Finance. In 2001/02, at the request of the Expenditure Review Committee, the Department developed a paper analysing the causes of the rise in numbers of children in care and identified some strategies to reduce growth. It was agreed that a strategic framework would facilitate external appreciation of the Department for Community Development's approach in the care for children area and enable a strategic approach to providing quality care and reducing the growth in the number of children.
- The Department is operating with outdated legislation. A project to develop contemporary legislation is nearing fruition. This project has involved extensive consultation as well as close examination of relevant interstate and international legislation. It will also be consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The new legislation tackles many of the issues discussed in this document and will have a major impact on policy and practice.
- In the past two years the Departmental Executive has commissioned a range of reviews, research and evaluation projects concerning care for children. The reports are all complete now and, since many are interrelated, their findings need to be integrated into policy where appropriate. Topics covered have included: relative care, role of alcohol and substance abuse in care and protection applications, early attachment theory, risk issues while in care, a review of the foster care recruitment service, examination of the 'family to family' service, review of permanency planning and adoption and a Service Development Review in 2001 on care for children. The findings from these reports are incorporated into the discussion of issues in Section 4.

- The Department has also recently reviewed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, which is a significant part of its business particularly given the increasing number of Aboriginal children in care.
- The Office of the Auditor General has conducted a review of the children in care area and recommended a number of initiatives to improve the quality of care.
- A report by the CREATE Foundation '*Participation of Children and Young People in Care in the Western Australian Legislation Review*' identified various significant issues for children in care and made recommendations for the Department's consideration.
- The Department has also been developing strategic frameworks for the Early Years and for Child Protection. It is intended that all frameworks will be consistent and together they will form the basis for a coherent Departmental strategic plan.

This document is structured into several main sections with the purpose of moving from broad principles and strategic aims to the development of a specific work agenda. The introduction is followed by a discussion of the vision and principles which underpin the care for children area. A description of the model used to conceptualise key areas for action is followed by a summary of each of the key decisions required and their associated issues. Planned achievements for 2002-05 are summarised. Finally there is a discussion of future directions and a process for implementation.

## Scope

Care for children is an area of work which is closely linked to other responsibilities for the welfare of children. Clearly a core definition is the care provided through the medium of the State Government for children whose parents or guardians are unable to provide them with adequate care. However this framework operates within a broader notion of a continuum of care. By continuum of care it is meant that children and families should be able to access the supports and services they need, not only at the time of crisis when a child must enter care, but at earlier points in time where the risk may be averted, or later when supports are needed for a child to leave care. Thus from the perspective of a child and family they should not need to be at a point of crisis to have the opportunity to receive services. The continuum can be conceptualised in terms of the changing nature of risk for the child and the proximity to the experience of being in care.

In terms of scope the implications of using a continuum of care approach are that care for children need not be considered as referring solely to the period when a child is in care – included are supports and services before this time and also after the child leaves care. Consequently at question for this framework has been whether to include within scope such areas as adoptions (a form of care), early intervention (a way of reducing the number of children entering care), and child protection (a significant pathway by which children enter care). Two concepts were used in deciding on these questions of scope. Firstly, that it would be impractical to incorporate in this framework those qualitatively distinct areas of Departmental responsibility which have long established separate conceptual, strategic and legal frameworks. In such instances it appears more logical to acknowledge the links between the areas of work but to devise separate frameworks for each, which then link with this framework within an overall Departmental strategic plan. Child protection and adoptions fall within this ambit. Secondly, whether the area of work can be conceived as being located on the continuum of care. In this respect early intervention does fall within scope as hypothetically intervention could occur with all those children potentially at risk of entering care; while on the other hand only a minor proportion of children enter care as a direct consequence of child protection investigations, and much fewer children enter adoption than other forms of care. Thus within scope in this document is work relating to early intervention, the responsibilities of providing care for children (both wards and non-wards, but excluding adoption) and supports for children leaving care.

Relevant to the scope of a strategic framework is also the level of operational detail to be covered. The approach taken in this document was that it would be useful to identify broad principles and a conceptual framework, and then move from these to detailing specific projects. In this way it is intended to show broad directions and the specific initiatives derived from them. Of course the effective implementation of initiatives is very much dependent on the resources deployed and multifarious operational issues such as team structures and case practice standards. The general approach here has been to identify these as issues to be addressed without presenting particular solutions. That level of detail is considered out of scope of a strategic framework although it is acknowledged that there are many pressing operational issues which must be dealt with if any of the projects in this document are to be effectively implemented.

## Partnership

The word 'partnership' is frequently used in this document, indeed it is integral to the new directions of the Department for Community Development. What partnership means in practice differs according to the area of work, and will also evolve over time. One of the subtle outcomes of this framework is intended to be a more mature understanding of what partnership means and is capable of in the context of care for children.

In this document partnership means several things. It is a recognition that the complex social problems underlying care for children are usually best undertaken through cooperative actions between relevant agencies, and the community. This can mean cooperation between government agencies, between government and the not-for-profit sector, and between any of these and the community, or special interest groups in the community. This cooperation has several characteristics if it is to become a partnership:

- Has a primary focus on the consumer with the aim of creating better outcomes through a synergy of available services, making the system easier to understand and access, and avoiding potential gaps between services and over time.
- Is developed through goodwill and an understanding of the needs of consumers and not necessarily through the formal requirements of existing structures. In this respect it generates greater flexibility than existing service arrangements but is more vulnerable to changes in organisational direction. As such it may in time need formal validation and agreement to endure.
- Operates with a clear understanding by all parties of their responsibilities and limits. These can evolve over time. Partnership can therefore coexist with other forms of relationship. Thus the mutual, formal responsibilities of government and the agencies it funds can function as part of a broader partnership.
- Shows due concern for ethical issues, in particular that the partnership is not distorted by innate imbalances of power and so is mutually respectful. There is sufficient accountability for individual responsibility to not be diluted.
- Where the partnership is with the community it is particularly important that it is a voluntary and not coercive association, and that it is negotiated with stakeholders and citizens.

With these principles taken into consideration a partnership can take many forms and yet still function for the benefit of clients and the community.

## 2. Vision And Principles

The overall vision and purpose of the Department for Community Development are:

### Vision

*Improved social wellbeing for all individuals, families and communities in Western Australia.*

### Purpose

*To enhance the social wellbeing of all Western Australians by working together to:*

*Strengthen communities so that individuals and families are able to meet their needs, achieve self-reliance and contribute to their own solutions*

*Promote a just and equitable community enriched by diversity and increased social participation, and*

*Support families and communities to provide for the care and safety of their members*

In the care for children area, the Department for Community Development is one of many agencies which support families and the community in seeking to meet the best interests of the child. When the Department for Community Development does intervene with a family and child it does so with the following specific vision and principles for the care for children area.

### *Vision*

*The child is safe from harm and his or her developmental, psychological, emotional and cultural needs will be met through the provision of placement and other services.*

### *Principles*

*a) It works cooperatively and respectfully with children, families, the community, other government and not-for-profit organisations.*

In other words the Department will seek to draw on the broadest community capacity to further the best interests of children and will do so in a fashion which is grounded in mutual respect.

This principle implies:

- Cooperation in planning and provision of services.
- Clarity and accountability in information provision.
- A clear legislative framework.
- Ensuring that children and young people in care have a right to freely express their views in relation to their lives and for these views to be part of decision making processes about their future.
- Ensuring families are aware of and can contribute to decisions that affect their children.
- A commitment to social justice.
- An acknowledgment that the not-for-profit sector and the Department are active partners in the delivery of placement and other services to children.

b) *It operates within a model of service which recognises there is a continuum of care.*

This principle is a further recognition that there has always been a much wider focus to the care for children area than solely the maintenance of children's placements. Planning and resourcing need to occur across this continuum to achieve optimum outcomes for children.

In terms of services the components of this continuum are:

- Prior to care services
- entry to care services
- family care services
- residential care services.
- leaving and post-care services.

c) *It recognises that in general children are best cared for by their own family.*

In other words the Department should seek to support children to be cared for by their families unless it is in the child's best interests to be placed elsewhere. The Department should make all possible efforts to return the child as soon as possible, however the best interests of the child are the paramount consideration throughout.

- Services are provided to support families and the community in improving parenting.
- Entry to Departmental care is a last resort to be used when children's needs are not being met.
- Entry to care occurs within a clear legislative framework and is based on sound professional judgements about children in discussion with their families.

Where children do not have families, and this is particularly the case for unaccompanied refugee minors released from detention, this principle becomes a responsibility to advocate on behalf of the children for their safety and social inclusion.

*d) Children are provided with quality care that meets the individual needs of children and young people.*

If children are placed away from their families a high standard of care must be provided. Quality can encompass many elements:

- The child's time in care is planned throughout.
- There is a realistic focus on the strengths of the child and their families.
- Placements are safe, and operate in a way which meets the needs of children.
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle applies, and in general the cultural connections of children are respected and supported. Placement decisions are to be made in partnership with an approved Aboriginal childcare agency as outlined in the Principle.
- The cultural connections of CALD children are valued.
- A stable environment is sought for children.
- Continuity and connection with their families is sought and in general siblings are cared for together.
- A range of appropriate placement options, including family-like settings, are made available to meet the needs of children.
- A whole-of-government response is sought for children with complex needs such as children with disabilities and unaccompanied refugee minors.
- While in care children, families and carers participate in decisions about their future lives.

*e) Children leave care in a planned way and with appropriate supports.*

An essential part of the continuum of care perspective is the understanding that the transition from care is a significant moment which must be managed carefully.

- Young people leaving care are assisted to make the transition to independent living with both immediate and long term outcomes taken into consideration.
- Children return to families on the basis of sound professional judgement that they will be safe and their needs met.
- Children and young people participate in decisions about leaving care.

### Balance in implementation

There are some inherent challenges and tensions in the principles espoused above. These need to be reconciled at a casework level and within the strategic framework. The Department for Community Development and its partners should:

- Work efficiently and effectively within available resources to meet the espoused principles.
- Strive to balance the needs and wishes of children with those of the family and the community, while asserting the best interests of the child. In particular there is a significant professional decision to be made as to when children remain in their families and when their needs should be met through out of home care.
- Develop broad principles for action yet be sufficiently flexible to address individuals needs in a meaningful context.
- Make judgements on the future safety and well-being of children based on the best available information, which may be limited at the time.
- Act in concert with other organisations which may have different perspectives of the priorities for children and families.
- Maintain clear confidentiality and ethical standards for the information it collects but must also be accountable and open to community scrutiny.
- Act in a planned, considered fashion and yet be highly responsive to emergency situations.

### 3. Key Areas for Action

The approach proposed in this paper is intended to assist the Department and the not-for-profit sector in making strategic decisions about the care for children area. Clearly the focus of concern is on the child throughout but to act strategically it is necessary to conceptualise care for children work into broad manageable areas where change can be initiated. There are four key areas for action identified in this report. These are depicted in Figure 1 (Appendix 1).

The key areas of action reflect the principles and values described in Section 2. In applying the concept of a continuum of care three of the four key areas relate to minimising entry into care, quality care, and leaving care. The other key area is a recognition that some strategic changes impact across the continuum of care. An example is the development of contemporary legislation. This key area is described here as 'systems change' to reflect the broad across government and sector responsibilities it encompasses.

Each of the four key areas comprises a range of complex and significant changes.

#### a) Systems change

The strategic aim of systems change is to ensure a system which supports and facilitates working with and for children in care. While the focus is on improving the system the purpose is to provide the best supports for children and families. In this context 'systems' can be taken to mean higher-level organisational and sectoral processes which influence the whole care for children area. This covers such diverse matters as the development of contemporary legislation, re-invigorating the relationship between the Department and the not-for-profit sector, mechanisms for improving responsiveness to children's views of care, enhancing capacity for information analysis to report on quality assurance and accountability issues.

#### b) Minimising entry into care

The strategic aim here is to have established processes which identify and support families, with the assistance of the not-for-profit sector and the community, so the likelihood of children entering care is reduced. This implies a range of interventions designed to respond to the key themes which cause children to enter care. Included are early intervention activities such as the Family Strength initiatives, and other interventions such as intensive family support services, provision of drug and alcohol abuse services and Indigenous family support.

### c) Quality care

The strategic aim for this area is within available resources to provide a varied and flexible series of care options to best meet the diverse needs of children in placements. This should incorporate understanding of the differences among children entering care, and the way their needs change if they remain in care over an extended period of time. The nature of quality care should be established through collaboration with stakeholders to identify key outcomes. This area has been the topic for much policy and research in recent years. Consequently there are a significant number of different initiatives which might be pursued. These include options for improving the stability of placements through permanency planning, or subsidised guardianship initiatives; options for enhancing the types of care provided through consideration of the development of tiered professional care which watches the skills of carers to the needs of children, and changes to Departmental hostel and residential care services; improved methods of assessing and planning for educational outcomes for children in care; options for attracting and supporting quality care providers (including Indigenous and CALD care providers) through the evolution of the foster care recruitment process and a relative care program.

### d) Leaving care

One strategic aim of this area is to reorient existing systems and policies to recognise the responsibility of governments for facilitating flexible transitions for young people leaving care in a way that parallels parental responsibility. The other strategic aim is to ensure processes are implemented to ensure re-unification of children with their families occurs in a planned and well considered fashion. This implies the development of a range of transitional support services for young people leaving care, also for planning, decision making and quality assurance processes in casework.

As with other initiatives in the plan it is important to involve stakeholders in designing these processes, including children and young people.

These key areas are represented in Figure 1. Also included in that diagram are markers for the decisions which are assessed as pivotal in the strategic framework, by virtue of their critical value for policy, their resource implications or their impact on other decisions (eg. the legislative framework is likely to affect all other decisions and may have resource implications).

## 4. Issues

### 4.1 Systems Change

Efficient, effective and compassionate systems are required to manage the continuum of services for children in care including those which prevent entry to care, provide quality care or assist children and families when children leave care. In this instance systems are considered to be the broader, over-arching structures by which the Department and the not-for-profit sector work across the continuum of care. The purpose in making systems change is to leverage the greatest benefits for children and families.

#### Legislative Framework

Legislation underpins the roles and responsibilities of the Department and not-for-profit organisations which provide services. The current legislation which dates back to 1947 is in the final stages of review and the new Bill will provide for legislation based on up-to-date knowledge regarding services for children and which reflects contemporary community values. It will in particular provide a more flexible range of care orders, ensure more effective planning for children in care, support transitional services for children leaving care and enable children to have a say in decisions that affect them.

#### Joint Responsibilities

While the Department has a major responsibility in government for children in care, there is significant benefit to be gained by seeking to enhance the services provided by other departments to children. Many children in care fall well behind their peers in educational attainment and health status while being more likely to have had contact with the juvenile justice system or to participate in harmful risk taking activities. In addition there are also joint funding responsibilities across governments which call for cooperation to ensure best outcomes for children. More importantly there are various issues for which a whole of government response is imperative.

There is a clear need to review and improve the formal understandings between the Department and its partners in government and not-for-profit organisations so that children in care receive the specific assistance they require. Work in this area will include the development of a specific memorandum of understanding with the Disability Services Commission (regarding costs of children with disabilities). In addition the Department for Community Development will enter into understandings with other Government departments to ensure children in care receive appropriate services.

To further the strategic management of joint responsibilities the Department for Community Development has established a Children and Young People in Care Advisory Committee to advise the Director General on the direction of policy and practice issues. The committee will have membership from across the sector and is committed to working with the Department and to taking on tasks and responsibilities to enhance the vision and principles of the Strategic Framework.

In addition a formal interagency working group has been established to ensure that young people in care receive integrated and customised services from a whole of government perspective that recognises their special needs.

### Children's Voice

Children and young people should be given the opportunity to freely express their views about decisions which have a significant impact on their lives. These views must be sought and considered in planning and decision making processes in all matters that have a significant impact on the child's life, and given due weight according to the developmental capacity and age of the child, and other circumstances. These issues will be incorporated in the new Legislation, and there will be other projects which review the voice of children in the casework process. Another necessary process is to ensure that any complaints from children and families are attended to in a prompt and fair fashion. To this end the Department for Community Development will be enhancing its complaints process during this period. The Department for Community Development Consumer Advocate will attend the CREATE foundation once weekly as a way of improving accessibility to the views of young people. In addition there will be an annual forum with CREATE to further consult with young people. The Department will continue to review the capacity of its existing systems to access the representative view of children and young people in care.

### Building the capacity of staff

Staff who provide services to children are central to the provision of high quality and compassionate care; ensuring that staff are well supported is essential. The new Department for Community Development will enhance the structures within which staff work, promote the best use of their skills, and conduct ongoing training to build staff capacity. At a service delivery level the structure of local service delivery arrangements will be reviewed to ensure staff are well supported in their work and that the local community and services are linked to the needs of children. The issues of appropriate resources and workload will continue to be examined, within the constraints of the available Departmental budget. A special project to trial new ways of managing workload will be conducted, with Union involvement, at the end of 2002.

Training for staff, both Departmental and from the not-for-profit sector, involved in caring for children is central to the provision of high quality services. There is a need to review training plans to ensure that all staff are trained in basic skills and, as they gain more experience, pass through a structured program of learning to attain more advanced skill development. This training plan should incorporate new concepts as they emerge but still maintain the integrity of the essential training program. There should also be consideration of possibilities for partnership and collaboration across the sector, and examination of the capacity within the tertiary institutions to provide advanced training.

As part of this process of building staff capacity it is intended that systems be examined to improve staff retention so that children experience a minimum of staff movements during their period of care.

### Information Collection and Analysis

A comprehensive information system is an essential tool in maintaining effective and efficient high quality services. The Department's CCSS (Client and Community Services System) database and recording system has developed incrementally over the past ten years and currently provides for details of children to be accessible from anywhere in the state, for case management information and payments to be provided from each local office and for a range of statistical reports to be produced. This information contributes to national reports which allow comparison with other jurisdictions, provides performance indicators and supplies regular reports to the Department's executive: all of which contributes to the overall development of policy and the maintenance of quality services.

The growth in the number of children in care, the increasing complexity of cases and the constant need to improve quality requires a more sophisticated approach to monitoring service provision.

More detailed reports for the Department's Executive and policy makers will provide improved understanding of issues such as the growth in the number of children and lead to services being redeveloped to better meet the needs of children and families. Expanding the range of performance monitoring information will ensure quality assurance can be improved; for instance areas such as the education and health of children in care are ones where there is a need for careful monitoring as part of a quality assurance process. More detailed monitoring will also assist the Department in its duty to ensure children in care are not exposed to risk or harm by identifying whether preventive measures are in place and the possibility of abuse in care is minimised.

For the purpose of efficient management, the Department should also develop its capacity to forecast the population of children in care and associated costs.

There is also a need to review possibilities for better sharing and analysing the information collected across the sector, within the constraints of confidentiality and privacy.

The Department has already significantly improved the way it collects and uses information about children in care. The Looking After Children (LAC) system ensures relevant information about a child is recorded and is accessible and “moves” with a child as he or she moves to a new placement. It is also intended to ensure essential information is gathered to inform decisions relating to the need for placement, enable safe and appropriate initial care, and inform the development of effective care plans.

LAC should not be viewed as solely a system of information collection. It is intended to guide case practice and quality assurance processes. It will build partnerships between children in care, parents, carers, case managers and other stakeholders by requiring their participation, not only at the information gathering stages, but also ongoing planning. As a result, it also ensures the voice of children is heard.

An important component of the LAC system is the assessment and monitoring of the educational performance of children in care. This will be the specific focus of work conducted by the Department in response to the ‘Report Card on Education’ by the CREATE foundation. An action plan is being developed at the time of writing<sup>1</sup>.

It is planned to redevelop the Department’s CCSS software to significantly enhance monitoring and evaluation capacity. In addition the new system will provide for more efficient case management by streamlining systems and computerising administrative processes currently done manually. This will improve both the quality and the efficiency of care.

The LAC system has been developed to facilitate case practice and management of information at a corporate level has not been a consideration so far. One of the challenges of the development of LAC is to integrate information it records within CCSS so that it supports case practice but also permits a corporate level view of outcomes.

The LAC system needs also to be evaluated to determine whether it is achieving benefits. The evaluation should cover process issues, for example: how well LAC is implemented and maintained, as well as have an outcomes focus such as whether LAC resulted in better service delivery and outcomes for children. A necessary element of the evaluation will be access to good monitoring data through the integration of LAC within CCSS. The pace of this integration will influence the timetable for evaluation.

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<sup>1</sup> This project is not included in the Planned Key Achievements section 5.2 as it is currently under development.

In the context of monitoring quality outcomes for children it would be useful for the Department for Community Development to do a more longitudinal follow-up of children in care. In other words to identify what happens to the children during their entire period in care, rather than just record events during a particular financial year, in order to better determine patterns in care over time and analyse whether there are crucial points of intervention which can significantly affect outcomes.

## 4.2 Minimising Entry into Care

It is a fundamental principle of care for children services that children should be cared for by their families whenever possible and that entry to care should be the last option when considering where children in need of assistance should live. The Department funds or provides a number of services which aim to minimise the need for children to enter care except where it is appropriate to ensure that the child is not at risk of harm or neglect. These range from parent skilling services to intensive support for families and services which aim to reunite children in care with their families.

While the Department seeks to minimise the number of children in care it is also recognised that the best interests of some children may be met by being in care for a period. There is no intention to set numerical targets for reducing total numbers as this might adversely influence the balance inherent in quality practice. The trends in numbers of children in care are very carefully monitored but practice is guided by the principles discussed in section Two.

In the period from June 1997 to June 2001 the number of children in care rose by 46%. By August 2002 there were 1771 children in care (1295 wards and 476 non-wards) an increase of 10.5% compared to June 2001. There have been commensurate increases in the total costs associated with children in care. Similar trends have occurred across other jurisdictions in Australia and it should be remarked that in June 2001 Western Australia had a lower rate of children in care (calculated per 1000 children in the population) than any other state.

Analysis of Departmental data shows the total number of children entering care has not primarily been responsible for the increase rather it is that fewer children are leaving care hence creating an overall increase. Comparisons with other states show that Western Australia is the state with the largest percentage of children in care who have spent two years or more in continuous placement. This is a reflection of the nature of care orders used in this state (other states have shorter term orders available) and the complex problems experienced by children and families. The nature of these problems require a whole-of-government and whole of community response. The increase in total numbers of children in care should therefore not be viewed narrowly as an issue that the Department for Community Development can 'solve' through a change of policies or practice.

A significant reason for children entering care is as a result of substantiated child abuse or neglect: while the number of children who have been substantiated as physically abused declined between 1999-00 and 2001-02, and substantiated cases of sexual abuse remained at the same level, the number of cases of neglect increased by 18%. There is evidence that this increase is the result of increased drug and alcohol abuse by parents. Other significant factors, which often co-exist with drug and alcohol abuse, are family violence and mental illness. Consequently more children are entering care at an early age with reduced prospects of returning home.

In addition, Indigenous children are over represented in most of the figures which describe the population of children in care. For example the most recent national report 'Child Protection Australia 2000-01' gives the West Australian ratio of Indigenous children in out of home care to other children as 7.5:1<sup>2</sup>. Western Australia has the fourth highest ratio of Australian jurisdictions. The issue of Aboriginal social disadvantage and its impact on the child protection system is a significant one for any policy development concerning children in care. The Gordon Inquiry has further highlighted these policy concerns. It is possible that the Government's response to the Gordon Inquiry may in the short-term lead to an increase in the number of Indigenous children entering care. Many of the strategies outlined in this framework include a significant focus on Indigenous families and children.

The above analysis identifies causal factors for children entering care which extend beyond the responsibilities of the Department and require refocussing of resources on families where drug abuse affects their ability to care for children. This will occur in partnership with the Drug and Alcohol Office and through new services funded or provided by the Department. Where appropriate a wider range of inter-agency collaboration will build on such partnership to respond to the complexity of reasons children enter care.

The Department funds not-for-profit organisations to provide intensive support to families where children may be at risk of entering care and to assist children to return home if appropriate. These services are at a stage in their funding cycle where their appropriateness is assessed and any necessary adjustments in the nature of the services made to ensure that they meet the changing needs of families and children.

The effectiveness of assistance to parents at an early stage in their children's lives is well documented and the government's Family Strength initiatives are designed to assist families in need and ultimately reduce the number of children in care. As part of Family Strength the Department will expand its

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<sup>2</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2002. Child Protection Australia 2000-01. AIHW cat. No. CWS 16. Canberra: AIHW (Child Welfare Series no. 29). Table referred to is Table 4.8. Ratio is based on an Indigenous figure of 16.6 children per 1000 in the population compared to 2.2 for other children.

Best Beginnings home visiting service to parents with young children from two sites to five in 2002-03 and provide a similar increase in funding for Aboriginal family support services. This is a significant increase in the resources for preventive services.

In addition the Department will fund a new concept in assistance to families with young children through services that support early development. These services will provide a community focus for assisting families and help parents to provide an environment in which young children can develop their cognitive, social and emotional skills, and parents can be linked to other services and support.

### 4.3 Quality Care

There will always be some children who need to enter care. When this occurs they should receive quality care in a placement that is as normal as possible and allows them to achieve optimum emotional, social and physical development. Positive outcomes for children and young people in care can be achieved through continuity of care and stability of placement. Services need to ensure children and young people do not drift in the care system. Where possible, links need to be maintained with their familiar environment and ethnic, religious and cultural identity.

#### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle confirms the Department's commitment to the placement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children within their families and communities if out of home care is required. The principle recognises and ensures consideration of customary roles and responsibilities of the Aboriginal extended family in child rearing. It also includes the need for input from an approved agency in placement decisions.

The principle has been reviewed and updated to reflect a focus on the best interests of the child. The principle is to be included in the Department's new legislation.

There should also be consideration of the principle which applies to children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. This should recognise the Department's commitment to the placement of CALD children within their families, and communities if out of home care is required, and will accordingly acknowledge and ensure due consideration of ethnicity, culture, religion and extended family in child rearing.

## Permanency Planning

Children and young people have their needs best met in continuous, stable, loving care and a safe home environment. Research on brain development in children is influencing the understanding of the importance of the relationship between experience and events in early life, including the quality of nurturing and attachment and the child's psychological, cognitive and physical development and later learning and behaviour.

Entry to care is a last resort to be used when children's needs are not being met. The ultimate goal of placement is reunification. In those cases where reunification with family is unlikely because of continuing problems in the family setting, there needs to be consideration of appropriate stable and secure care options. The challenge for the Department is to identify as early as possible which child or young person is unlikely to return home, implement appropriate contingency planning and identify the best choice of permanent placement. Planning should include the child or young person's future contact with family, kin and community.

Children and young people needing permanent placements include those who have experienced long periods of multiple temporary care and where reunification with family has proven unsuccessful; babies and young children who enter care during their primary attachment and early development stage and who have little prospect of returning home; and older children who present with difficult behaviours due to early damaging experiences, including severe abuse and neglect.

The Department needs a contemporary policy on permanent care that identifies a range of appropriate permanent care options and placement supports.

In addition, in response to the report by the Office of Auditor General<sup>3</sup> the Department for Community Development is currently developing strategies to improve the stability of appropriate placements for young people in care. This is an area of the strategic framework which is likely to require careful exploration of the long-term resource implications.

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<sup>3</sup> Accommodation and Support Services Provided to Young People Unable to Live at Home

## Relative Care

Relative care involves the formal placement of children and young people with extended family carers or members of the child's or young person's friendship or community network. Almost one third of children and young people in care in Western Australia are placed with relative carers.

Research has found that relative care placements have a number of advantages over placements with strangers. Children in relative care generally experience a greater sense of family continuity, more frequent and consistent contact with birth parents and maintain closer ties with siblings. However, the trend is that children in relative care remain in care longer and are less likely to be reunified with their birth parents.

Relative carers are not perceived as foster carers and therefore the same standards and procedures for assessment, training and reviews are not applied. The level of financial and other support varies and is generally not at the same level as for general foster carers. All these factors have implications for the quality of care provided to children and young people.

Responding to relative care requires focused policy and practice development to ensure the needs of children and care providers are adequately understood and met. This may need a whole of government response particularly for areas of high need such as remote Aboriginal communities.

## Flexible Care Options

Children and young people requiring placement need to be matched to the most appropriate care arrangement depending on their developmental and emotional needs and their family circumstances. A larger range of options is required for children and young people.

The Department funds and provides a number of placement services that aim to provide quality care for children.

Non relative foster care is still the most commonly used placement for children and young people. It has been suggested that children and young people in care generally are presenting with more challenging behaviour and their family situations are often more complex than previously. One significant issue for discussion is whether the Department should professionalise some foster care so carers are recognised for the difficult work they do with demanding children. This would involve developing partnerships with carers in order to meet the needs of children and young people, providing comprehensive training and increasing the level of financial and other support.

Service agreements are currently being negotiated between the Department and the not-for-profit sector with the key objective of providing a range of suitable options to meet the needs of individual children.

## Recruitment of Foster Care Providers

The increasing number of children in care has created a greater pressure to provide and maintain quality placements. There is also a need to ensure diversity in care providers to match that of children and young people (this might include attention to cultural background and location as well as other factors). An important part of the response is the centralised Foster Care Recruitment Service. In developing a flexible and responsive placement system it will be essential to ensure through this service that there is a continuing supply of quality foster carers becoming available. This will require effective recruitment practices and a process for supporting carers. This is particularly an area where co-operation between Government and the not-for-profit sector is very effective.

## Hostels<sup>4</sup>

It is vital for hostels to deliver quality outcomes for young people. Projects are being undertaken in both metropolitan and country areas to enhance outcomes over time. In the metropolitan area, the Department for Community Development is engaging the community in this process with the establishment of community reference committees in those areas where hostels are located. A plan has been developed for dealing with behaviour management issues within hostels; the Department is actively pursuing suitable alternative locations for two hostel services; existing hostels are being extensively refurbished to meet existing quality standards. Through the combination of these activities it is intended that the community be positively engaged in the hostel development process and optimum outcomes are achieved for young people. For country hostels significant work is proceeding on the integration of the residential care functions with Departmental field zone operations, and the development of quality assurance processes, in order to improve the quality of care. This project is likely to result in increased staffing levels at some facilities and improved training.

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<sup>4</sup> The discussion excludes Aboriginal student accommodation hostels which need to be considered in other areas of Departmental planning.

## Service Delivery Arrangements

The annual increase in the number of children in care has placed additional pressure on Departmental service delivery offices and on the available pool of care providers. Consequently significant issues have been raised about the way service delivery is structured, and the resources deployed to support it. The restructure of the Department has provided the opportunity to review the way service delivery is organised and supported. This is one of the major initiatives for the Department's Community Development and Statewide Services Directorate. The success of the resulting changes need to be monitored and reviewed as they are a crucial determinant of the Department's capacity to pursue the initiatives outlined in this framework.

Workload management is one of the issues which needs to be addressed in the planning of new service arrangements. It is also being explicitly addressed in a demonstration project being conducted at the end of 2002 which tests a workload management strategy. As well as casework requirements, the project also assesses the contribution of administrative and accountability requirements to overall workload.

## Unaccompanied Refugee Minors

The Department provides settlement support services to unaccompanied children released from immigration detention to live in the community.

These supports include meeting children on arrival in Perth, assisting with emergency accommodation, providing counselling, information, advocacy and assistance to access community resources such as trauma counselling, Centrelink, education and training and longer term accommodation.

As well as the above, the Department has developed a number of strategies to reduce the social isolation unaccompanied children experience following release from detention. In doing so, the Department collaborates with other organisations which provide services to unaccompanied children through mechanisms such as frequent face-to-face discussions, email groups and community networking.

The Department, in conjunction with its counterparts in other States and Territories, is negotiating a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs for additional Commonwealth funding to support these children.

## 4.4 Leaving Care

Children and young people leave care via two main pathways. Young people may leave the care of the Department to move into independent living. Often this will be due to the expiry of a care order. This group by definition tends to be the older group of children in care and many will have been in long term care.

Alternatively, children and young people may be reunified with their families. This group can include children and young people of all ages, however they tend to be younger, and may have been in care for a very short period through to very long term care. It is important that the views of children and young people be taken into account when a decision on reunification occurs.

### Transition to Independence Services

These services aim to assist young people who have been in care to make a successful transition to adulthood moving toward independence. Services also aim to achieve reintegration and contact with the young person's family.

Services are planned mainly through the usual case management mechanisms such as case conferences. Similarly services are usually delivered as part of case management. In addition, there is currently one specific transition service in the metropolitan area, delivered by a non-government agency. One of the initiatives in the Government response to the State Homelessness Taskforce is the expansion of such services.

While some young people leaving the care of the Department experience a planned and supported transition to adulthood, others experience an abrupt cessation of support.

Concerns about poor outcomes for young people leaving care and the need for improved leaving care services have been identified nationally and internationally. The Commonwealth for example, will introduce in 2003 a transitional living allowance to assist young people leaving state supported care.

It is intended that proposed new legislation for the Department will address the planning and provision of support to young people leaving care.

## Reunification Services

Children may return to family care following short or long term periods of care. Research clearly demonstrates that the first few months a child is in care are critical to a successful return home. If a return home cannot be achieved within this critical period, the likelihood of long term care being required is significantly increased. Given that the critical period is quite short, intensive planning and services are required from the point of children entering care, aimed at returning the child home with supports within the first few months.

For those children who have been in longer term care, services aimed at reunification may be provided as part of individual case management plans and through specialist higher intensity non-government services in the metropolitan area.

Currently, the process of reunification is seen in dichotomous terms: the child is either in care, or returned home. The reality is that a move from "in care" to "reunification" is extremely complex. It is recommended reunification be seen as a process of moving through a range of care options; from higher intensity options where the child's needs are fully met by the Department, towards less intensive options where the child's needs are met primarily by the family. These options might include shared care arrangements, "Family to Family" foster care arrangements, subsidised guardianship, and so on. The current non-government reunification services would be another component, but the overall mix of services needs to be considered as part of the range of services provided by the non-government organisations

## 5. Directions

### 5.1 Developing a strategic projects timetable

The current key issues in the care for children area were identified and discussed in Section 4 above. It is clear from this discussion that there are a number of significant strategic actions which should occur. There is considerable interrelationship between the different elements of the care for children system and action on one initiative is likely to affect another. One of the principal tasks of a strategic framework is to ascribe some order to these activities so the process is manageable and change develops in sequence. This section will describe the development of a project timetable for this strategic plan.

In determining a timetable, order has been based on consideration of priority of issues, available capacity, links with current initiatives (eg. The current Departmental restructure), logical conceptual order (ie. Responding initially to the issues with the broadest impact on other care for children issues, creating a form of cascading effect) and the potential for developing partnerships. The draft timetable for 2002-05 is presented in detail in Appendix 2. In the main text is a summary of planned achievements for 2002-05.

The first step in constructing the project timetable for the strategic framework is to identify current initiatives with significant implications for the care for children area. There are several such projects underway: the restructure of the Department for Community Development; the renegotiation project with the not-for-profit sector; the development of a position paper on permanency planning; the negotiation of a memorandum of understanding about refugee minors; the reconfiguration of the metropolitan hostels; the implementation of LAC together with incorporation of Looking after Children data into the Department's CCSS database. Each of these projects are scheduled to reach important milestones during 2002-03. To be mindful of available resources, and in recognition of the anticipated wide-reaching effects of these initiatives, it is logical to schedule other tasks to commence after these projects have made substantial progress.

The sequence of tasks tends to cluster into three main streams. Each of the tasks in these streams have strong natural relationships which need to be considered in managing change.

The first stream relates to information monitoring processes and accountability. This incorporates many of the issues from the systems development component discussed earlier (see Figure 1). Essentially this stream is aimed at broadening the range of information concerning care for children. This includes the redevelopment of the Department's client and services database (the Assist project) and the incorporation within it of information from the LAC project. It also includes improving the use of existing information for monitoring and accountability, enhancement of existing executive reporting, improved financial forecasting, and risk management reporting of abuse in care issues.

The second stream refers generally to the quality care area. This possesses the most complex set of interrelationships because it deals with policy and practice influencing the variety of care options available to children. In this stream the first level of action covers the existing initiatives mentioned earlier (ie. Legislation, permanency planning etc). Once decisions are reached at that level then there is a basis for lower-level decisions which have resource implications - subsidised guardianship, development of a tier of professional foster care, and the establishment of a kinship care program. Finally these have implications for some specific decisions regarding: the nature of foster care recruitment, the final team structures, and the best ways of maintaining stability of contact for children.

The third stream refers to work intended to increase the engagement, inclusiveness, and openness of the Department for Community Development. This includes work on memorandums of understanding with other Government Departments, renegotiation of agreements with the not-for-profit sector, enhancements of the complaints process, establishing a new Children and Young People in Care Advisory Committee to the Director General, incorporation in the new Legislation of processes which give children a voice in decision making which affects them. In this stream many projects can reasonably progress in conjunction but they must be carefully managed to ensure consistency with strategic directions.

Various initiatives from the 'minimising entry to care' and 'leaving care' action areas do not so obviously cluster into streams of tasks. In the project timetable their ordering is based on consultation on relative priority and availability of resources.

## 5.2 Planned Key Achievements

At a strategic level the implications of this project timetable will be various key achievements for each year until the conclusion of 2004-05. The achievements are listed below. To reduce the size and complexity of this section they have not been placed here in the context of the broader planned achievements of the Department, the Government as a whole, and other statewide initiatives. It is intended that the Department's strategic planning process will weave together these different strands into a complete picture.

Each planned achievement is referenced against the key areas for action. The code for each of these is:

- Systems focused change: SYS
- Minimising entry to care: ENTER
- Quality Care: QUAL
- Leaving Care: LEAVE

Clearly some achievements could be seen as crossing several categories, particularly systems change which by definition has a broad impact. In general, identifying all these different effects would present a confusing multiplicity of categories so a complete description is not attempted here and in most cases a single category is recorded. The exception is for achievements where there is a possible impact on children entering care. Those achievements where there is a secondary effect on entry to care have 'Enter' added eg. [SYS, ENTER]. This is in recognition of the considerable expectation in Government that the Department will clarify its initiatives for reducing the growth in total number of children in care.

### 2002/03

- Contemporary Legislation is introduced to Parliament. [SYS, ENTER]
- A new complaints procedure for children in care is implemented. [SYS]
- A new children and young people in care advisory committee is established. [SYS]
- The renegotiation plan for the not-for-profit sector is completed. [SYS]
- An inter-agency strategy for integrated care across the sector is developed and implemented to improve the quality of care by reducing the number of placements children experience. [SYS]

- Development with the Foster Care Association of an action plan for utilisation of the additional funding it has received. [SYS]
- A memorandum of understanding is reached with DIMIA on the situation of both unaccompanied and accompanied refugee minors. [SYS, LEAVE]
- A memorandum of understanding is reached with the Disability Services Commission on costs of children with special needs. [SYS]
- A Department for Community Development action plan is launched to respond to concerns raised in CREATE report on children and young people in care. [SYS]
- New service delivery arrangements in the Department for Community Development are developed to respond to care for children issues. [SYS, ENTER]
- The Department for Community Development develops improved processes for monitoring and analysing information for purposes of accountability, quality assurance, risk management, modelling the population of children in care and financial forecasting (this will include the first stages in integrating Looking After Children data into the Department's CCSS database). [SYS]
- Planning commences for a longitudinal research project tracking outcomes for children in care (this will cover a range of quality measures and indicators of well-being). [SYS]
- An Early Years Framework is developed [ENTER].
- Early years strategies are established through the Family Strength Program. [ENTER]
- The Department for Community Development in partnership with the Drug and Alcohol Office and other agencies develops and implements processes for assisting parents with alcohol or substance problems who might be at risk of their children entering care. [ENTER]
- A country support service is established for children in Women's refuges. [ENTER]
- A support service is established for young homeless parents. [ENTER]
- A relative care policy is developed. [QUAL]
- Weekly visits by the Consumer Advocate to CREATE commence. [QUAL]

- The new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle is implemented. [QUAL]
- A new CALD child placement principle is developed. [QUAL]
- Procedures concerning abuse in care are reviewed and any necessary changes are implemented. [QUAL]
- Policies and procedures concerning the voice of children are reviewed (this includes consideration of issues of participation, advocacy and rights). [QUAL, LEAVE]
- Implementation of changes to country hostels – integration with divisional operations and the enhancement of quality assurance processes. [QUAL]
- Commencement of implementation of changes to metropolitan hostels including plans for behaviour management issues, finding of suitable alternative locations and refurbishment. [QUAL]
- Case practice issues identified in the CREATE report, and through the renegotiation project, are reviewed and necessary changes are implemented. [QUAL]
- A policy position is reached on permanency planning and an implementation plan developed. [QUAL,ENTER]
- A strategy to improve stability of placements is developed and implemented. [QUAL]
- A plan is developed for the evaluation of the Looking after Children process. [QUAL]
- A workload management demonstration project is completed.
- New metropolitan and country transitional support services for young people leaving care are developed and implemented. [LEAVE]
- The Commonwealth is assisted to implement the transitional living allowance for young people leaving care and moving to independent living. [LEAVE]

2003/04

- New legislation is considered by Parliament and regulations developed. [SYS, ENTER]
- Changes in the relationship between the Department for Community Development and not-for-profit sector are implemented. [SYS]
- Implementation of policies and procedures relating to Children's Voice. [SYS]
- Commencement of longitudinal research project tracking outcomes for children in care (the project will cover a range of quality and leaving care measures). [SYS, LEAVE]
- Commencement of new training processes for staff working in the care for children area. [SYS, ENTER]
- Implementation of two support services for children in family supported accommodation. [ENTER]
- A relative care policy is implemented.
- Permanency planning changes are implemented. [QUAL]
- Metropolitan hostel arrangements are completed. [QUAL]
- A CALD child placement principle is implemented. [QUAL]
- A position paper and action plan on tiered professional care is developed. [QUAL]
- A position paper and action plan on subsidised guardianship is developed. [QUAL]
- Further planning is commenced on the integration of Looking after Children data within the Assist process for the purpose of aggregated assessment of outcomes for children. [QUAL]

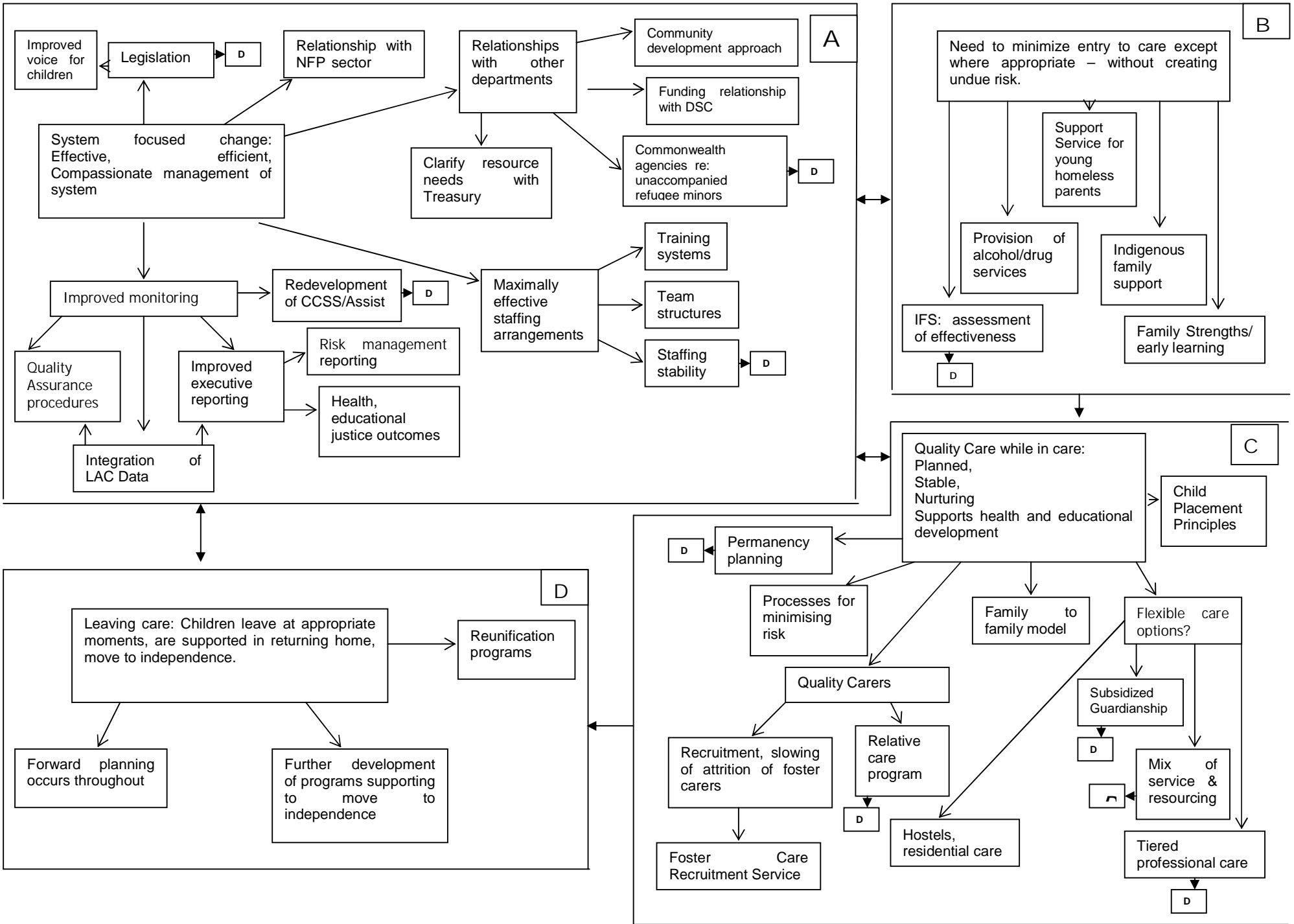
2004/05

- New Legislation is implemented. [SYS,ENTER]
- Strategic framework for 2005-07 is developed. [SYS]
- Tiered professional care changes are implemented. [QUAL]
- Subsidised guardianship changes are implemented. [QUAL, LEAVE]
- A decision is made on the feasibility of implementing the Family to Family program in Western Australia. [QUAL]
- Implementation of a broader strategy for Foster Care recruitment service. [QUAL]
- Evaluation of Looking After Children program is complete. [QUAL]

## **6. Conclusion**

This paper has been an outline of a framework which can be used in making essential strategic decisions and actions in the care for children area. Principles and values have been enunciated, the key issues have been summarised and an initial timetable established. The framework has a custodian who will ensure the proposed key achievements are monitored, and adjustments are made to the framework if circumstances change. It is intended this will be a living document which will provide a focus for this important area of work.

**APPENDIX 1  
DIAGRAMATIC PRESENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC  
FRAMEWORK**



**APPENDIX TWO:  
STRATEGIC PROJECTS TIMETABLE**