

Keep them Safe
A Shared Approach to Child Wellbeing
2009-2014

Key Actions:

Chapter 1:

The Universal Service System:

- Universal home visiting to every parent with a newborn baby
- A quality pre-school education for every 4-year-old
- Mental health screening for all mothers in NSW (SAFE START)
- Parenting Education (Triple P) for parents with children aged 3-8
- Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health services state wide.
- Things to consider:
 - o The need for targeted universal services
 - o Accessibility and targeted outreach services
 - o No investment in general community development programs.

Chapter2:

Strengthening Early Intervention and Community Based Services:

- Expand the existing Brighter Futures program (200 additional families)
 - o Will review future enhancements based on the outcomes of the program evaluation in 2010
- Expand the current number of sites offering sustainable health home visiting to target at-risk teenage mothers
- Expand home school liaison program
- Expand counselling to parents through enhanced school-family services
- Additional funding to schools to provide a timely response to children at risk of harm.
- Things to consider:
 - o Not enough investment in prevention and early intervention to reduce the number of children and families who come in contact with the child protection system
 - o Delayed transfer of services to the non-government sector
 - o Brighter Futures is considered a pre-statutory intervention program. There is a need for an early intervention program (broader criteria)
 - o The need for early intervention programs for families with children aged between 9 and 14.

Chapter 3:

Better Protection for Children at Risk:

- Increase the threshold to 'risk of significant harm'
- Pre-natal reporting
- Joint investigation responses to serious cases of child abuse (JIRT)
- Violence Prevention Coordination Units
- Reviewing the police response to domestic and family violence incidents

- Access to specialist expertise for DoCS caseworkers (Drugs/Mental Health/DV)
- Improving the provision of specialist services to children who experience abuse and neglect
 - o Improve the delivery of substance abuse and mental health services
 - o Auditing vacancies of sexual assault counsellors will be developed by the end of 2009
 - o Examining the need for new services based on the Kaleidoscope model in high needs areas to support children under 10 who are sexually abused or display sexually abusive behaviour
 - o After-hour support to young people in custody
 - o Support children and young people and parents with a disability
- Intensive family support services (including family preservation, provided by the NGS)
- More effective integrated case management strategies to support families who come in contact with the child protection system frequently (2100 family groups account for 24 per cent of reports to DoCS, and 7500 families account for 48 per cent of total child protection reports)
- OOHC
 - o Improving education outcomes
 - o Access to health services (health assessment in the first 30 days and specialised packages of health care will be considered)
 - o Improved support for foster, relative and kinship carers
 - o Safeguards for children who may be in voluntary OOHC
- Intensive Supervision Program (ISP) for adolescents at risk of re-offending
- Review the role and accountability of the Children's Court Clinic, to move towards a more holistic and less incident-based response to children and their families.
- Things to consider:
 - o The need for pre-statutory intervention programs (similar to the way Brighter Futures is currently operating) to support families and children at risk
 - o The importance of having the Regional Intake and Referral Services (RIRS) and the Wellbeing Units operating before enacting the changes to the legislation
 - o The need for key performance indicators to measure the success rate of these services (particularly in relation to education, health and developmental outcomes for children and young people)
 - o The need to invest more in family support services (including family preservation)
 - o The need to explore integrated services models to help families with multiple needs and families who come in contact with the child protection system frequently.

**Chapter 4:
Changing Practice and Systems:**

- The establishment of the Child Wellbeing Units
 - Regional co-location of Department of Education and Training (DET) with the Area Health Services Child Wellbeing Units will be explored.
- The Regional Intake and Referral Services
 - Two service models will be trialled
 - Responsibility of service delivery and case management will remain with local service providers
 - Where there are no RIRS, the Units will be able to refer families to existing services (this mechanism is yet to be established).
- Things to consider:
 - The RIRS and the Units need to be operating before the changes to the legislation are enacted
 - The need to consult with the NGS to develop RIRS models that will work effectively for families and children
 - The need for integrated services models in regional and remote NSW.

Chapter 5:

Better Supporting Aboriginal Children and Families:

- A strategic approach:
 - NSW State Plan (five objectives: safe families, education, environmental health, economic development and building community resilience)
 - *Two Ways Together* 10-year plan to improve the wellbeing of Aboriginal people (The Partnership Community Program)
 - COAG (National Framework for Protecting Children)
- Working with Aboriginal communities:
 - Principles for an effective child protection system:
 - Empowerment
 - Capacity building
 - Universal services:
 - Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Strategy
 - National Partnership for Indigenous Early Childhood Development
 - The establishment of nine child and family centres in NSW (to provide early childhood, and parenting services to families in one location)
 - School education strategies to ensure school attendance on a daily basis and support the employment of additional home school liaison officers
 - New Pre-school Investment and Reform Plan funding models will continue
 - Appropriate housing solutions
 - Early Intervention Services:
 - NSW Health's Aboriginal Family Health Strategy
 - Services for men (healing programs and men's groups)
 - Tailored parenting courses

- Sustained health home visiting
- Child Protection Services:
 - The NSW Interagency Plan to Tackle Child Sexual Assault in Aboriginal Communities 2006-2011 and the Aboriginal Sexual Assault Taskforce
 - Joint Investigation Response Teams
 - Child Protection and Sexual Assault Counselling Services
 - NSW Aboriginal Mental Health Workforce Program
 - Parenting programs for offenders
- Statutory Child Protection:
 - Aboriginal Child Placement Principle
 - OOHHC and appropriate cultural interventions
 - Better health and developmental outcomes for Aboriginal children in care
 - Memorandum of Understanding between DoCS and Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC)
 - Strengthening promising programs (Brighter Futures, Capacity Building, Cultural Support Plans, ...)
 - Early intervention for juvenile offenders
- Aboriginal Workforce:
 - Strong peer support to develop resilience
 - Government Departments to build their Aboriginal workforce.

Chapter 6:

Strengthening Partnership Across the Community Services Sector:

- Building the capacity of the non-government sector
- Workforce and cultural change
- Training and development
- Supporting carers
- Supporting rural and regional communities
- A commitment to consultation.
- Things to consider:
 - Cultural change is not about changing systems and structures
 - Workforce and sector development goes beyond training and professional development. There is a need to address the parity in wages and conditions, portability of benefits, increasing the workforce, joint recruitment and training initiatives
 - Forced partnerships do not work.

Other things to consider:

- The principles underlying the Wood report and the system reform
- The role of the NGS in supporting the Government through this process (a true partnership from planning to implementation)
- There is a need to identify the gaps in service delivery
- Timeframes and resources are crucial to make this reform work.