Refocusing the Child Safety Response

As part of the Strong Families – Safe Kids Implementation Plan, a new child safety response framework will be implemented. As a first priority, Child Protection Services will be renamed Child Safety Services to reflect that it is one component of the broader system for promoting the wellbeing of children.

The structure of the new child safety service is based on feedback received from staff and other stakeholders throughout the consultation process. The new structure will support and empower the workforce to drive effective outcomes for children and families.

Child Safety Service Explained

Court Teams
Court Teams will provide a liaison, coordination and support function between short-term reunification, or permanency teams; the Child Protection Legal Group (CPLG) within Crown Law and the Magistrates Court. Members of this team will be given the tools and support to become familiar with each care application to be considered by the Court, ensure the collation of relevant documents and provide quality assurance for material provided to the CPLG and the Court.

Child Safety Teams
Child Safety Teams are small units where team members can work collaboratively for a group of children. Children at risk will be allocated to teams, as opposed to individual workers so that multiple skill-sets can be directed towards addressing the safety issues for the child. Working in teams will also help to use resources flexibly to address times when the needs of a child are high, or when members of the team are unexpectedly absent.

There will be two types of Child Safety Teams:

Reunification Teams
Reunification Teams will focus on working with families to safely return children home. Success in this process relies on a strong capability to work with the child, their carer/s and family, and a capacity to engage appropriate services to address the issues that led to the removal of the child in the first place. These teams will be structured to reflect the intensive nature of reunification, and will work in partnership with services across government and the community sector that are supporting and assisting parents and the child.

Permanency Teams
Permanency Teams will be tasked with securing and maintaining permanent (or up to 18 years) arrangements for the care of a child where the child is not able to safely return home. Dedicated teams will assist in building the capabilities and capacity required to manage this process compassionately and professionally.

Refocussing Child Protection Intake
Current resources focussed on child protection intake services will be refocussed and supported to provide a broader advice and referral service for the wellbeing of children that will act as a single front door to the child and family service system. A separate fact sheet has been developed for the Advice and Referral Service and the coordination framework for child wellbeing.
Supporting the Workforce to Support Vulnerable Children and Families

The Tasmanian Government recognises the critical role child safety team frontline works play in building strong families and safe kids.

In recognition of this important role, the Tasmanian Government is investing in additional resources to support frontline workers undertake this important work. This additional investment aims to strengthen the capability of our child protection workers; providing better structure and supports and improved personal and professional support that allows them to focus on what they do best – keeping vulnerable children safe.

Specifically, additional support for Child Safety Teams will include:

- **Senior Practice Consultants** – non-case load specialist that can support decision-making and practice across child safety teams
- **Support Workers and Unit Coordinators** – workers that provide direct support for the administration of teams and for supporting children and their families
- **Psychologists** – direct support for staff in dealing with the significant pressures of responding to the needs of children
- **E-learning and staff development resources** – to ensure that the service is skilled and can adapt to changing practice.

This additional investment will not only better support our child protection workers to do their job, but create a stronger, safer future for Tasmania’s children and young people.

Staff and Union Consultation

Moving to the new structure of Child Safety Teams represents a significant reform in the delivery of child safety services. The Strong Families – Safe Kids Implementation Plan commits to a phased implementation process for this initiative over a three year period from 2016-17 – 2018-19.

We recognise the need for significant consultation with staff, unions and other relevant key stakeholders to transition to the new structure, and are committed to providing ongoing opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback and input into this process.

The Implementation Team will work with staff and unions to develop role descriptions for members of each of the proposed new teams, and map the level of service demand for each function.

This work is scheduled for completion by Quarter Four – 2016-17. This work will then inform rollout of new team structures across 2018-19.

More Information

To find out more about the Strong Families – Safe Kids Implementation Plan visit

www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/strongfamilies-safekids