

Child Safety Planning and Partnerships Network

Newsletter update on progress of the Child Protection Statewide Partnership Taskforce

April 2007

Update from Taskforce Meeting held 2 April 2007

The 25th meeting of the Taskforce was held on 2 April 2007 with a particular focus on Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI).

Cultural Respect Framework

An update was provided, which was endorsed by the Taskforce. A working party is to be formed to progress in consultation with other relevant work currently taking place.

Indigenous Service Response Update

- The Department of Child Safety is refocussing the way it responds to Indigenous issues.
- The Indigenous Support and Development Branch in Cairns would no longer exist. Following consultation, a lot of the work of the role ascribed to the Branch had been progressed.
- The Department would appoint 15 full-time employees across the zones, which would be senior positions to coordinate and drive Indigenous issues. The positions are to be centrally coordinated.
- Disappointment was expressed about the media release issued by the Minister in relation to the changes and that there was no acknowledgement of expertise in organisations which the department is currently funding. The Chair undertook to communicate the comments to the Minister's office.

Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian's Child Guardian Report 2006

- The Commission would shortly be publicly releasing the Child Guardian Report 2006.
- This report would be quite different to the 2005 report. It had changed focus to nine key outcome areas which had been developed.
- Future reports will be gathering specific data to report on key areas and will be split into two parts - child safety service system and youth justice.

Discussion of Identified Priority Areas

Priority Area 1 - Causal factors and prevention: The following Powerpoint presentations were provided:

"A service system not simply a service response" - a number of needs were identified including:

- Whole of government language – age, gender, location, culture, etc
- Consistent frame of reference
- Connections between social policy agendas of various agencies
- Common themes:
 - strength based
 - using universal services
 - responsive to needs of vulnerable families
- More flexible funding – not just one pathway
- Specific entry criteria dilemma, eg RAI
- Costs of moving to population health model
- Need high level mechanisms to address broad generic family support.

Demand for child protection services:

- Young people with high support needs in out-of-home care
- Typical experience with child protection systems
- Typical reasons for entering the system
- Child and family background
- Child protection concerns increasing
- Public awareness and notifications
- Social factors and notifications
- Contributors to growth in notifications

What keeps children out of the child protection system:

- What works in reducing child abuse
- Programs initiated at Windale
- The “Eyeball” of prevention
- Ecological and hierarchical structure of wellness
- Personal and societal factors
- DOCS NSW Literature Review
- Policy Brief No 6, 2007 – Centre for Community Child Health, Royal Children’s Hospital, Victoria
- So what works
- Home visiting programs

Priority Area 2 – Characteristics of successful, innovative and holistic PEI delivery models for high risk families: The presentation by Mick Naughton, Department of Human Services, Victoria covered Victoria’s approach to aligning prevention/early intervention with statutory Child Protection Services:

- Description of the Victorian Family Services operating context
 - Evolving the authorising environment, Ministerial Portfolios 2006
- New Act – new paradigm
 - Unifying Legislation supported by a new practice model
- A single integrated continuum of Family Services, Child Protection and Placement Services
 - Annual Notifications to Victoria’s Child Protection Service
 - Where we are now
 - The design process – what we’ve been doing
 - Family Support Innovation Project Evaluation findings
 - Positive Evaluation Findings
 - Progressing the service system development
 - Paradigm shifts and outcomes in Victorian child welfare
 - Learnings and Challenges

Summary of Themes:

- Need for more flexible funding models (currently very siloed)
 - existing restrictions of / pathway with specific entry criteria :
tendering models for NGOs - Incentivised for collaboration
- Need for an integrated continuum of services
 - currently a range of social policy agendas
 - no consistent frame of reference or language
 - visible and apparent to community

- Complexity and layers of multiple characteristics
 - age, stage, culture, gender, location, intergenerational
 - focus on development, not just safety
- Measurement and evaluation
 - currently focus on inputs, not outcomes
 - how do we integrate “ground up” data
 - evaluation of RAI (counselling vs basic needs)
 - need for outcomes based (Treasury acceptable) data to justify funding
 - have a central social research unit outside of government
- VIC findings:
 - centralised intake and referral process
 - community based child protection workers
 - active engagement of “at risk” families
 - timeframe – not an easy process

Where to from here?

Following the facilitated session, considerable discussion occurred in relation to progressing the themes which emerged over the two Taskforce Meetings on Prevention and Early Intervention. The following options were identified as possible avenues to progress the issues:

- To present the identified themes in relation to Prevention and Early Intervention through the CEO Committees;
- The Child Safety Directors Network to progress the themes through their respective domains; and
- Non-government members to present the information to Minister Pitt at a meeting scheduled for 24 April.

Members discussed the need to convene another shorter meeting to finalise the PEI discussion. Discussion also occurred in relation to the future focus of Taskforce in terms of

- What is the scope of work?
- How does it get progressed?
- Depending on what the scope is, who should be part of development of the body of work?

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Taskforce will be held on 18 June 2007.

**For further details visit the website at www.childsafety.qld.gov.au
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