



Child Safety Planning and Partnerships Network

A joint initiative between the Department of Child Safety, government and community stakeholders

September 2006

This newsletter provides an update on the progress of the Child Protection Statewide Partnership Taskforce. For more details visit www.childsafety.qld.gov.au



Update from September Taskforce Meeting

Common Needs Assessment

Discussion at the July taskforce meeting concentrated on the placement and support service system and identified greater coherence required around needs assessment and matching to services.

To progress this topic further, the focus of the September taskforce meeting was on needs assessment. Presentations were provided to stimulate discussion around the issue.

Belinda Hersey, Policy and Practice Development Branch, Department of Child Safety, presented an introduction to common needs assessment that highlighted:

- differing purposes for needs assessment
- role and functions of needs assessment
- principles that underpin needs assessment
- issues that require further discussion
- steps being undertaken in Queensland – Child Information Form
- examples provided included:
 - Department of Child Safety Structured Decision Making
 - UK Common Needs Assessment
 - Looking After Children.

Peter Melrose, Training and Development Officer, PeakCare Queensland, presented non-government organisations' feedback on current experience of needs assessment. In particular, the survey highlighted:

- that there is inconsistency about assessing need
- that information sharing was not adequate
- a lack of suitable placements made it difficult to match need to places.

Proposed actions included:

- the continued use of Zonal Planning and Partnerships Officers in facilitating local dialogue
- enhancing coordination at a government and system level
- using taskforce working parties to investigate and recommend service improvements.

Tony Stevenson, Executive Director, Anglicare Central Queensland, presented a Therapeutic Assessment Model being used by his service. The model highlighted:

- the relationship between assessment and the service response
- that the initial needs assessment should be followed up with therapeutic assessment, for example Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and Dysfunction and Distress Assessment Tool
- that good assessment can inform the type of placement and transition between placement types.

Alf Davis from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Partnership, discussed the role of Recognised Entities in needs assessment. Key points raised during the presentation included:

- that appropriate engagement leads to accurate assessment
- that Recognised Entities' functions focus upon child protection where a holistic approach to wellbeing is required, rather than a focus on safety issues only.

Analysis of Needs Assessment

Further discussion on how the issues raised could be progressed centred on:

- articulating the linkages across different types of assessments, for example Structured Decision Making, Health Passports and Education Support Plans
- accurate assessment being dependent on quality of information from a whole range of players
- assessment models addressing both child and family wellbeing
- a small workgroup further scoping the issue of collaborative assessment and reporting back to the next meeting with a suggested workplan.

Information Sharing

Attention was drawn to the partnerships website www.childsafety.qld.gov.au/partnerships/cpstatewide/index.html which has been updated following the taskforce review earlier this year.

Next Taskforce Meeting

The next taskforce meeting will be held 23 October with a focus on Indigenous services.