

Keep Them Safe

A shared approach to child wellbeing

Keep Them Safe Factsheet No. 8b

Child Wellbeing Units: Agencies without a CWU

Keep Them Safe: A shared approach to child wellbeing is the NSW Government's response to the Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW, led by the Honourable James Wood, AO, QC, released in November 2008. Keep Them Safe recognises the importance of the wellbeing of all children and young people, with the aim of providing appropriate support to families earlier, to prevent children and young people requiring statutory child protection intervention. To achieve this, Keep Them Safe encourages families, communities, government agencies and non-government organisations to work together to support children, young people and families.

Summary of changes

To ensure that vulnerable families are identified earlier and receive appropriate services in a timely manner, the government established new referral pathways to identify and provide services to children and young people who fall below the new risk of significant harm statutory threshold.

These pathways include the establishment of Child Wellbeing Units (CWUs) and Family Referral Services (see KTS Factsheet No. 9a: Family Referral Services).

What is a Child Wellbeing Unit?

CWUs have been established in four government agencies: NSW Health, the Department of Education and Training, NSW Police Force and Department of Human Services (Juvenile Justice, Housing and Ageing, Disability and Home Care). These government agencies made approximately two-thirds of all reports to the Child Protection Helpline before the threshold changed.

CWUs help reporters determine whether or not a risk of significant harm report should be made to Community Services. They also assist mandatory reporters to decide how to best assist children and families when concerns for their safety and wellbeing fall below the risk of significant harm threshold.

What does this mean for reporters without a Child Wellbeing Unit?

The changes require all organisations, both government and non-government, to think about how they can support vulnerable children and young people.

Mandatory reporters who do not have a CWU in their agency use the *Mandatory Reporter Guide* (refer to Factsheet No. 7: Mandatory Reporter Guide) to assess whether their concerns for a child or young person meet the threshold of risk of significant harm. When the *Mandatory Reporter Guide* indicates the concerns may reach the significant harm threshold these mandatory reporters are prompted to report their concerns directly to the Child Protection Helpline.


What supports are available to reporters working in organisations without a Child Wellbeing Unit?

Where the concerns fall below the threshold of risk of significant harm, where possible, mandatory reporters should:

- provide a service through their own organisation (where appropriate)
- use their own local contacts to make appropriate referrals (including the Domestic Violence Line, Early Intervention Services or other government and non-government services)
- use the Family Referral Service (FRS), where these have been established, to find an appropriate service
- use the Human Services Network database ServiceLink to find details of local community services
- contact the KTS Support Line for information and advice (1800 772 479, 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays))

What information will Community Services give?

Community Services provides feedback to mandatory reporters (usually via email or a faxed letter) about



whether their report about a child or young person has met the statutory threshold. In cases where it has been determined that the concerns fall below the threshold, the letter prompts mandatory reporters to make local referrals to services to help ensure these children and their families still receive an appropriate response.

How will a cumulative picture of risk be built?

Government agencies and non-government organisations are now able to exchange information under the new Chapter 16A of the *Children and Young Persons (Care & Protection) Act 1998*, where that information is relevant to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person. Sharing information under these circumstances is not limited to cases where concerns for a child or young person meet the threshold of risk of significant harm.

CWUs use a common database known as WellNet that shows details about a child and their family when CWU agencies are working with them. They also have limited access to the Community Services KiDS system, to identify children and young people currently being case managed by Community Services or a Brighter Futures Lead Agency.

For further information

- Contact the KTS Support Line, 1800 772 479
- Consult your Child Wellbeing Unit, if relevant
- Contact your supervisor or manager
- Consult your legal services branch
- Keep Them Safe: www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au
- HSNet ServiceLink: www.hsnet.nsw.gov.au
- Association of Childrens Welfare Agencies: www.acwa.asn.au

What's New?

- New referral pathways are in place to ensure that children and young people who fall below the risk of significant harm threshold are referred to appropriate local services.
- CWUs have been established in the four government agencies (NSW Police Force, NSW Health, Department of Education and Training, and Department of Human Services) that made the majority of reports to the Child Protection Helpline before the reporting threshold was raised.
- Mandatory reporters working in organisations that do not have a Child Wellbeing Unit use the *Mandatory Reporter Guide* and determine if they need to report suspected risk of significant harm concerns to the Child Protection Helpline.