

### Summary response to the Guardian's report on the Wellbeing of Children and Young People in Care in South Australia 2008-09

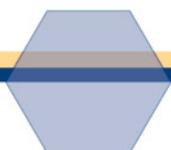
The Department for Families and Communities (DFC) is addressing a number of key actions identified in the Guardian's report, aiming to ensure that children do not experience instability in care at any time. The areas for improvement found by the Guardian are organised around the Monitoring Framework derived from the *Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care*, and based on 12 statements encompassing the Departments aspirations for children and young people in care.

Below outlines a summary of the Departments strategic directions in response to the Guardian's recommended areas for attention:

- The Guardian emphasises the need to commit to reduce over time the number of residents in any one residential care facility.
  - The Department plans to open two new 12 bed facilities in the metropolitan area in 2011, to be operated by Families SA staff.
  - Work is currently underway in accordance with achieving the strategies outlined in the draft *Directions for Alternative Care in South Australia 2010-2013*.
  - A draft *Quality Assurance Strategy: for the provision of alternative care services to children and young people in South Australia* has been developed.
  - A Non-Family Based Care Strategy is also in development.
  
- The Guardian highlights a need for more intensive therapeutic and case management services for young people who run away frequently. This includes the development of an alternative care plan that articulates future directions for achieving security, choice and stability.
  - The development of an *Integrated Therapeutic Services Framework* (as part of the *Quality Assurance Strategy*) will address children's and young people's therapeutic and behavioural needs.
  - Key outcomes arising from the development of the *Integrated Therapeutic Services Framework* include:
    - Improved assessment and care planning

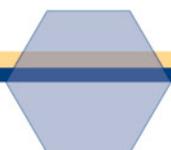


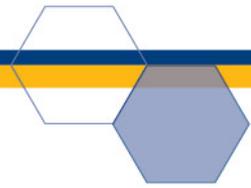
- An appropriate therapeutic response for all children and young people in care
- A reduction in subsequent placement breakdowns as a result of improved and timely responses to address the needs of children/young people
- Improved placement stability and continuity of care for children and young people
- Increased diversity of support services that meet the needs of children and young people with high and complex needs
- A joint initiative between Families SA and Yarrow Place Rape and Sexual Assault Service (CYWHS) is currently delivering intensive, assertive therapeutic services to 20 young people across four Families SA Office areas.
- The rollout of the new Families SA electronic case management system (C3MS) will provide more reliable data relating to access to services.
- A review of the timeliness and adequacy of mental health services for children who have suffered trauma and instability is required. In addition to this, the Guardian notes the need to improve the quality of rehabilitation programs available for young people who have broken the law.
  - The development of the *Integrated Therapeutic Services Framework* provides opportunity for an integrated “best practice” approach to therapeutic service provision to children and young people, their carers, families and communities.
  - The benefits of the Rapid Response commitment are still evident in improved cooperation between agencies, familiarity with the needs of children in state care and improved access to services.
  - A formal arrangement with The Second Story for health assessments and an intensive therapeutic service provided by the Youth Sexual Assault and Abuse Counselling Service for a small number of young people with high needs, has been established.
  - A range of new rehabilitation programmes have been implemented in youth training centres.
- To assist students who are at most risk of disengaging from school, and reduce the rate of suspension and exclusion of children and young people from schools;
  - Families SA and DECS are working collaboratively to increase the rate of use of Individual Education Plan’s (IEP) and to decrease suspension / exclusion rates via the School Retention Program for children and young people under the Guardianship of the Minister





- The expansion of the Innovative Community Action Networks supported by DECS coincides with the school retention strategy specific to students in out of home care.
- An individualised literacy and numeracy program is developed for each student who attends the Training Centre Youth Education Centre (YEC) for at least five days.
- A number of short-term courses are now delivered in youth training centres in areas such as First Aid, Green Card, Tyre Fitting and Driver's Licence.
- In response to the need to increase regular contact between children and their case workers;
  - Families SA recognises that more work needs to occur to enable increased regular contact between children and their case workers and is exploring a number of ways to support regular contact on an equitable basis responding to the needs and circumstances of the child.
- To seek improvement in the number of children and young people with a significant adult in their lives to at least 93 per cent in 2009-10;
  - Families SA agrees that relationships with significant adults should be assessed as part of the Annual Guardianship Review process.
  - The case plan for the child or young person ensures that family, key relationships and attachments are identified in the case planning process. To support this occurring, the case plan template leads case workers to identify and document significant relationships in the 'relationships and attachment' area of the case plan.
  - The Aboriginal Identity Planning Template currently being rolled out should be reviewed annually, and any updated information on community and family relationships is placed in the child or young persons Case Plan and/or Client Service Plan. This will be monitored formally through the annual review process, ensuring links to cultural and family or community support systems are maintained.
- To assist children and young people keep track of and understand their history and current circumstances:
  - Families SA has developed the template for Aboriginal Life Story Books which have been distributed to staff in Families SA Offices for use.
  - Training on the use of the Life Story books is well underway in the metro area and it will commence in the Country region early May 2010. Training in the Life





Story book will occur in conjunction with training staff in the Aboriginal Identity Planning Process.

- Families SA is currently developing policy and practice guidance for Life Story Books for all children in care and the development of Life Story Book templates for non Aboriginal Children – including children who are refugees.
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- Families SA has introduced guidelines for social workers in cultural identity planning and additional reference material was available to workers and carers in 2008-09. In addition, this includes:
    - Cultural Inclusion Framework launched in December 2006, currently located with Practice Development for appointment of Project Officer.
    - Implementation of the Aboriginal Identity Planning Guide currently being implemented by the Country Directorate.
    - Aboriginal Child Placement Principle Practice Guidelines endorsed in August 2009, linking child placements to cultural needs.

