

Better Care Better Services Standards (2007)

Directions Paper for FFS

November 2009

1. INTRODUCTION

All children in the care of the CEO, irrespective of service provider, should expect the same quality of care. The *Better Care Better Services Standards (2007)* (the Standards) were developed in partnership with non government services to reflect this commitment while enabling innovation and creativity on the part of service providers to meet the individual needs of children and young people. Implementation of the Standards has been designed to meet two requirements. These are a focus on quality assurance and continuous improvement.

2. DEVELOPMENT AND BACKGROUND

The Standards were developed throughout 2007 by a reference group comprising a range of non government service providers¹ and Department for Child Protection representatives. Partnership between these services was invaluable in developing a shared and meaningful understanding across the sector of the quality of care expected for children in the care of the CEO.

By committing to the Standards the Department and placement services have agreed to work together in a spirit of collaboration and cooperation for the benefit of children and young people supporting a whole of community approach to the protection of children.

In implementing the Standards the emphasis is on continuous improvement. The assessment of achievement against the Standards takes a graduated approach progressing from internal service provider implementation, self assessment to external validation.

¹ Alliance for Children at Risk; Children's Youth and Families Agencies Association; a representative from the Secretariat National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care; the Foster Care Association of Western Australia; the Create Foundation and the Department for Child Protection.

In summary, an assessment is made of what is working well and what can be improved within the framework of the Standards.

2.1. Pilot

A coordinated and integrated approach between the Department and non government service providers to implement the Standards was undertaken in 2008 – 2009 by way of a pilot. The pilot involved a two staged assessment process consisting of a self assessment followed by an external monitoring visit to the placement service.

Throughout 2008, Wanslea Family Services, Parkerville Children and Youth Care and the Department for Child Protection Accommodation and Care Services trialed a self assessment against the Standards. This involved the service providers' assessing their process documentation, staff and management awareness, output documentation and feedback from service users to assess their footing against the Standards. The findings of the self assessments highlighted numerous areas where the services are meeting the Standards and identified some areas on which to focus additional attention.

Based on the results of the self assessment, the service providers focused on the areas within their service that required attention prior to an external monitoring visit which took place during March – April 2009.

The external monitoring visit involved a small team of monitors validating the self assessment as well as speaking with staff, carers and young people on-site to obtain their input on the achievements of the service in furthering the Standards. In their assessment, the monitors highlighted areas of exceptional practice and also identified areas requiring attention. Importantly, the external monitoring process confirmed the high quality care and support being afforded to children in the CEO's care.

During May 2009, either by attendance at an Information Session or one – to - one meeting, the feedback on the pilot was presented to placement services. Reference to the Standards has been built into the 2009/2010 – 2011/2012 Service Agreements between the Department and Placement Services.

3. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

A significant milestone in the implementation of the Standards is their inclusion in the 2010 – 2013 Service Agreement. Implementation of the Standards is based on a graduated and cyclical approach. Key activities by financial year are described below.

3.1. 2009/2010

Self Assessment against the Standards:

In November 2009, service providers will receive a Self Assessment Package due for completion **29 October 2010**. The self assessment is to be used to determine areas where services are meeting the Standards as well as areas that require further attention. ***Service providers who do not provide placement for children in the care of the CEO in 2010 will NOT be required to complete the self assessment.***

Throughout November and December 2009 staff from the Standards Monitoring Unit (SMU) will contact service providers who are providing placement services to children in the care of the CEO to discuss how the self assessment can be best completed within their organisation. It is recognised that a number of service providers are familiar with self assessments and have a number of systems and processes that will provide information, while for other service providers this will be a new exercise. Efforts will be made to streamline the self assessment process by utilising existing systems and reporting requirements that organisations may already have in place.

The SMU will review each self assessment lodged, provide feedback to services and report on achievement and progress to DCP Contract Managers. The information obtained through the self assessment will also identify areas of good practice. The Department, in consultation with service providers, will determine how to share and promote these achievements. It is intended that the findings of the self assessment will be used by service providers to inform future planning and assist to target actions for priority.

External monitoring:

An external monitoring process will commence in 2010/2011. Children in Fee for Service placements will be monitored through the department's monitoring process for Districts. This will involve SMU monitors talking with the child, their parents, the carer,

the department's case manager, as well as examining documentation to assess the progress in implementing the Standards. As previously stated, the focus of the standards is on quality assurance and continuous improvement. The standards monitoring process will assist service providers to identify areas of their operations that require further attention and development. The purpose of the standards monitoring process is to identify opportunities for service improvement, not impose sanctions on service providers that have not fully satisfied the Standards.

Collaboration between the Department's SMU, Non Government Funding (NGF) Unit and Accommodation and Care Services (ACS) will ensure that the monitoring process compliments contractual requirements, is useful for both the Department and service providers in identifying service improvement opportunities and assists in embedding a continuous improvement culture within organisational activities. While the standards monitoring process does provide a quality assurance component the major emphasis of the process is on continuous improvement.

3.2 2010/2011

Self Assessment against the Standards

Annual self assessments against the Standards by service providers will continue for service providers which are not participating in an external monitoring assessment during the 2010/2011 financial year. SMU will review each self assessment lodged, including progress against the action plan lodged for the previous year. Feedback will be provided to services and SMU will report on the achievements and progress to NGF Contract Managers and ACS Support Officers. It is expected service providers will continue to provide feedback to SMU and NGF in relation to the ongoing improvement of the monitoring process.

External monitoring

External monitoring commences. A standards monitoring visit to the department's district responsible for case management will involve an examination of the documentation maintained, including policies, procedures, individuals' files, and organisational records, as well as obtaining direct feedback from children, their families, carers and staff. The monitoring visit will provide an opportunity for monitors' to validate work that has been outlined in the self assessment action plan and verify to what extent

the Standards underpin service provider activities. Services participating in an external monitoring visit are not required to complete a self assessment.

The standards monitoring visit will be undertaken by individuals external to the service provider and the department's district. The identified benefits of external monitoring include enhanced transparency, objectivity, an opportunity to identify trends across the sector and themes relating to service provider relationships with the Department.

3.3. 2011/2012

Self Assessment against the Standards

Self assessment continues by service providers. The Department will commence preparation for review with service providers regarding the value of the monitoring process to the service providers, service users and the Department.

External monitoring

External monitoring continues. Feedback between service providers, NGF, ACS and SMU for the continuous refinement of the monitoring process continues.

4. QUESTIONS AND FEEDBACK

If you have any questions please contact Robyn Hudleston on 08 9222 2598.

Timeframe – Key Tasks

September – October 2009. Self Assessment and Guide distributed to service providers.

September – November 2009. Standards Monitoring Unit and Non Government Funding Unit will meet with service providers to discuss completion of self assessment.

December 2009 – September 2010. Service providers complete self assessment identifying areas requiring additional attention, and work towards furthering the Standards (support available from SMU and NGF).

July 2010. External Monitoring Visits commence.

29 October 2010. Self Assessment forwarded to Department for Child Protection.

November – December 2010. SMU respond to self assessments and respond to service providers.

February 2011. Better Care Better Service Standards Forum. Service providers showcase good practice identified through self assessment and external monitoring visits.