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Multi Agency Safety Plans

All children and young people admitted to hospital as a result of abuse will have a multi agency care plan before they leave hospital.

Police, CYF and health professionals will agree on a plan which will include:

- who will care for the child
- identify and respond to their health needs
- identify what other support is necessary and how it will be provided
- clearly define the roles and responsibilities of professionals
- how monitoring will occur.

Child, Youth and Family policy will be amended to make these multi-agency safety plans compulsory for children who are hospitalised for abuse.

Child, Youth and Family agreements with District Health Boards and Police will be strengthened to include multi-agency safety plans.

Child, Youth Family Social Workers in Hospitals

Child, Youth and Family social workers will be based in key hospitals.

Currently only Auckland’s Starship hospital has a Child, Youth and Family social worker based fulltime there.

A dedicated Child, Youth and Family social worker will be attached to Counties Manukau, Waikato, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin hospitals.

In addition to the work they currently do in helping to protect children, they’ll liaise closely with hospital staff and the families of hospitalised under-2s. It is hoped the five social workers will be in place by the end of the year.

First Response trial

Each year Child, Youth and Family receives about 51,000 notifications from Police. When Police attend a family violence call-out and there are children in the home they notify Child, Youth and Family. This is approximately half of all notifications received by CYF.

Currently more than 40,000 of these receive no follow up as they are low-level incidents. However we know some of these are precursors to child abuse events, so we'll engage with NGOs to follow up these low level reports. The First Response trial will see Shine (Safer Homes in New Zealand), an Auckland community family violence prevention group, provide a crisis service for families who have had Police attend family violence call-outs.

The First Response service will involve:

- a Shine community social worker visiting the family as quickly as possible after Police attend an incident
- assisting the adult victim to develop a safety plan for themselves and children
- making referrals for the adult victim, child and/or perpetrator to appropriate services or programmes
- making a referral to Child, Youth and Family if a statutory service is required
- the provision of information to families
- initially the trial will involve the Grey Lynn, Panmure and Onehunga areas of Auckland. We anticipate around 700 children under two will be covered.

Children living in homes where there is intimate partner violence are seven times more likely to suffer physical abuse, and six times more likely to suffer incest.

The trial will begin in November 2009, and will be evaluated closely to see if it makes a difference to child abuse rates in the area.

Independent Expert Forum

The Minister for Social Development is setting up an Independent Experts Forum which will bring together key players in the field of child abuse to focus on how to prevent child abuse in New Zealand.

The experts will spend two days exploring ideas and solutions to addressing the unacceptably high rate of child abuse and neglect.

The forum, hosted by the Children's Commissioner John Angus and chaired independently, is aimed at providing Ministers with the best advice on priority areas for investment and abuse prevention programmes.

Data Monitoring

Currently, government agencies collect child maltreatment data for different purposes, which means there's not always a perfect match and sharing of data can be complicated by this. For example, agencies may:

- collect different information
- use different definitions of child maltreatment and its severity
- use different periods of time
- use different coding and ways of reporting.

We do have good data on the number of child deaths from abuse and neglect, but for other levels figures are more confusing.

To make serious improvements we need clear measurement tools. MSD will work with other agencies to improve the collection and recording of information to ensure that the right data is available for the right agencies at the right time, and that we can measure improvements over time.

'Never, Ever Shake a Baby' campaign

The information campaign is aimed at ensuring that all New Zealanders understand that you should 'Never, Ever Shake a Baby'.

Health professionals, educators, and key organisations in the community who interact with new parents and caregivers will be armed with information and resources on shaken baby syndrome.

It is also aimed at getting communities, neighbourhoods and families spreading the message.

The campaign will begin by November 2009.

Auckland DHB Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Programme Pilot

Child, Youth and Family is supporting a 'Shaken Baby Prevention Programme' being developed by the Auckland District Health Board, led by Dr Patrick Kelly, New Zealand's leading child abuse paediatrician. The programme is based on an American model, which is shown to reduce shaken baby rates by 40%.

This will involve staff talking to new parents in the Auckland District Health Board region about the dangers of shaking babies and providing information about the consequences of Shaken Baby Syndrome. The programme will reach up to 5,000 new parents each year.

The ADHB programme will be tailored so it is relevant to a New Zealand audience.