



## Background for Children's Teams

### Children's Action Plan

- Through the Vulnerable Children Act (2014), the Government has made sweeping changes to how we protect vulnerable children so they can thrive, achieve and belong.
- The Children's Action Plan and the Children's Teams are introducing a fundamentally different way of working for the agencies and organisations committed to early identification and preventative action with vulnerable children and their families and whānau.
- The Children's Action Plan maps out how government is working to improve results for vulnerable children and their families and whānau. It includes the establishment of Children's Teams as well as measures to protect vulnerable children and get better results, including safety checking of people who work with children and a programme to build children's workforce capability.
- Under the Act the five Chief Executives of the Ministries of Social Development, Health, Education and Justice and the Police are required to work together to prepare and report progress on a Vulnerable Children's Plan.

### The New Children's Entity

- The child-centred, multi-agency approach of Children's Teams will be an important part of the new children's entity which comes into effect 1 April 2017.
- The new entity will shepherd significant change for vulnerable children, their families and those of us who work alongside them to be safe and thrive.
- The Children's Action Plan has been doing things quite differently for a while now. Ten Children's Teams throughout the country have worked with more than 2,200 children so far by supporting and enabling local professionals to team up and work together in a fundamentally different way.
- Working across traditional sectorial disciplines has challenged existing understandings of what it means to work together. Being relentlessly child centred has pushed the envelope on what can be achieved when unmet needs are the sole basis for conversations about what or how services should be delivered.
- Also alongside some of the bigger teams the Children's Action Plan is piloting the Vulnerable Children's Hub as a single intake triage point and the ViKI IT system which is sharing information and connecting the children's workforce like never before.

- The Children's Team approach will continue to evolve as the new operating model for vulnerable children is implemented.
- Alongside the co-design of the new operating model, Children's Teams will continue to accept more referrals, engage more lead professionals, and most importantly continue to make a difference for even more vulnerable children and young people.

## Children's Teams

- The Children's Team approach is a fundamentally different way of working to support vulnerable children whose issues do not meet the statutory intervention threshold of Child, Youth and Family.
- Each Children's Team is comprised of a Children's Team Director and administrative staff supporting a group of senior specialists which might include clinical paediatricians, social workers and teachers.
- The Children's Team approves the referral of a child to the Team and assigns a Lead Professional to undertake one assessment and one plan of action for that child. The Lead Professional regularly reports back to their Children's Team on progress against that plan, which the Children's Team monitors and reviews until the child's needs are met.
- Lead Professionals bring together the key frontline workers from a range of agencies, iwi services, non-government organisations and the community involved in supporting and delivering services for a child and their family and whānau. This unique group (Child's Action Network) is informed by the assessment process after a referred child has been accepted by the Children's Team.
- Lead Professionals can come from a range of agencies or services and are chosen for their ability to best support that child and family.
- The Children's Team Director is a recognised leader in the local community and is guided by a Local Governance Group. This group ensures the Children's Team Director has the resources necessary to address the needs of the vulnerable children and their family and whānau in their communities.

## Why we need Children's Teams

- Having the opportunity to intervene early is what the Children's Teams are all about. Some vulnerable children require Child, Youth and Family support. But there are many vulnerable children (and families) whose lives can be improved through individualised support before their circumstances worsen.
- All vulnerable children must have their needs addressed. These children and their whānau need support for this to happen – but as everyone who works with children knows, something different is needed for each child and their family.

- The Children's Team works with existing resources but provides the opportunity for government agencies, iwi and non-government organisations to bring together their existing services for vulnerable children into one personalised plan for each child and their family and whānau.
- The ten existing Children's Teams have shown us that successful results for children depend on strong, enduring and practical relationships. Building and embedding those relationships and getting that teamwork going takes time, but the results are worth the effort.
- Children's Teams in Rotorua, Whangarei, Counties Manukau, Hamilton, Tairāwhiti, Eastern Bay of Plenty, Horowhenua/Ōtaki, Marlborough and Canterbury are changing the lives of the children they support.

## Running Children's Teams

- Children's Teams are locally led, nationally supported.
- The Children's Action Plan Directorate in Wellington supports communities to establish their own Children's Team, prepare their children's workforce, and develop the networks and practices they'll need to succeed.
- People in the community decide how all these parts fit together, who is on their Children's Team and how the team is run.

## What the Children's Team means for frontline workers

- Lead Professionals use a common assessment framework (Tuituia) that provides them with a consistency in how they identify and work on the challenges facing a child and their family and whānau so they can plan and deliver the right services to meet that child's needs.
- Practitioners delivering services to the child and their family and whānau are able to focus on delivering their service, rather than trying to fill gaps and find other services for the child.
- Over time, they will see unmet needs addressed earlier, family resilience building and fewer families 'churning' between agencies.

## Children's Workforce

- The children's workforce includes around 370,000 dedicated people who plan, manage and deliver services to children. Each strives to get the best outcomes for the children with whom they work.
- The Directorate is working with government agencies to support people who work with children to work together in a new way to address child vulnerability. Key workforce changes include improving organisations' child protection policies, strengthening safety checking, and developing the core competencies needed to work together.

- We're phasing in the safety checking requirements over three to four years to give people time to have their entire workforce checked.

## Child Protection Policies

- Under the Vulnerable Children Act all government agencies working with children, and the children's service providers they fund, must have child protection policies. These policies support frontline practitioners to identify child vulnerability and take the appropriate action (including making a referral, if that is in the best interests of the child).

## Safety checking and the workforce restriction

- New Government safety checking regulations made under the Vulnerable Children Act require State-funded organisations who work with children to have all their paid children's workforce safety checked. This will make it easier to identify the small number of people who are a risk to children.
- On 1 July 2015 the first phase of the new requirements came into force. State-funded employers need to ensure core children's workers starting a job with them as employees or contractors are safety checked before they start work.
- On 1 July 2016, in phase two, State-funded employers need to ensure their new non-core employees or contractors are safety checked before they start work. [www.childrensactionplan.govt.nz/childrens-workforce/](http://www.childrensactionplan.govt.nz/childrens-workforce/)

## Core competencies

- We are in the process of developing a core competency framework to support children's workers to better identify, support and protect vulnerable children.
- The core competency framework won't replace existing specialist and professional standards and frameworks. It will complement these by identifying the skills, values and knowledge that are shared across the workforce, and which are most important to better support vulnerable children.

## The Vulnerable Children's Hub

- The Vulnerable Children's Hub is a contact point for professionals and practitioners wishing to notify the Children's Team about children they're worried about. We are testing this in the Hamilton, Canterbury and Counties Manukau Children's Team sites.
- It enables early identification of vulnerable children so we can take proactive, preventative steps to address the needs of the child and their family and whānau.

## Vulnerable Kids Information System (ViKI)

- ViKI stands for the Vulnerable Kids Information System. It is a web-based case-management system that enables secure information sharing between professionals and practitioners working in the Children's Teams.

## Why we need the Vulnerable Kids Information System (ViKI)

- ViKI helps people in Children's Teams work more effectively together. Securely sharing information about a vulnerable child enables them to get a full and complete picture of that child and enables them to provide the right services at the right time.
- ViKI is a web-based system used initially by the Vulnerable Children's Hub and the Hamilton, Canterbury and Counties Manukau Children's Teams, and will help reduce duplication of effort.
- ViKI helps enable us to consistently measure the difference we're making for vulnerable children. We'll get a much better idea of what works and doesn't work and that will help us to make better decisions on future services for vulnerable children.
- ViKI has been developed with in-built role based security and privacy rules to prevent unauthorised access.

## What sort of information can be shared by the Children's Teams?

- We now have an information sharing framework (Approved Information Sharing Agreement AISA) that provides certainty about what information about vulnerable children and their families and whānau can be shared, for what reasons and with whom.
- It is part of the legal framework for information sharing in the Vulnerable Children's Hub and its referrals through to the Children's Team.
- Developing the AISA included intensive targeted consultation with our stakeholders including the Office of the Privacy Commissioner.

For more information go to:

[www.childrensactionplan.govt.nz](http://www.childrensactionplan.govt.nz)