Foreword

The out of home care system in Tasmania has had to respond to continual and increasing demand for placements for children and young people requiring a child safety response. Service providers, carers and staff have individually worked hard to provide care for more than 1100 children who can’t live at home each night.

It is now time to actively combine our efforts to improve the experience and outcomes for all children in out of home care in Tasmania and to ensure mechanisms are in place to safeguard their safety and wellbeing.

The Government has already accepted the intention and direction behind all seven of the recommendations contained in the Commissioner for Children and Young People’s report ‘Children and Young People in Out of Home Care in Tasmania’. These have been incorporated into this Strategic Plan.

Furthermore, the Department has developed its own recommendations to support continual improvements to the out of home care system, including full compliance with National Standards; better oversight of performance and contract management of all Children and Youth Services purchased out of home care services and strengthening complaints processes for children and young people in out of home care.

This Strategic Plan outlines a positive way forward that, with sustained long term effort, will contribute to the delivery of better outcomes for children and young people requiring short, medium or long term care away from home.

In progressing the work outlined in this Strategic Plan, collaborative effort will be required across the Department and all providers within the out of home care system. To that end, we encourage everyone, when approaching these changes, to put the interests of children and young people first.
Vision for Out of Home Care in Tasmania

All children and young people are raised in a safe, supportive and nurturing environment with every opportunity to reach their full potential.
Purpose of this Strategic Plan

A number of initiatives are already underway both within Children and Youth Services and more broadly that are contributing to positive outcomes for children and young people in out of home care. It is time to draw all of these elements together into a clearly articulated strategic plan that focuses effort on ensuring the design and delivery of out of home care services is planned and coordinated to meet the needs of children and young people in Tasmania.

This Strategic Plan brings together priority actions that represent logical first steps, reflect existing policy commitments, align with national efforts or will have the greatest impact. Subsequent plans will capture those actions that will further build on the system improvements or require a longer lead time for implementation.

Governance

Improving and strengthening the out of home care system will take time and will require strong leadership and unwavering commitment from all stakeholders. One of the first actions under this plan will be to determine governance and oversight arrangements, including identifying supports and resources to ensure the realisation of this Strategic Plan.

Commitment to Reporting on Progress

This Strategic Plan will be supported by an Implementation Plan which will set out timeframes and detail key activities that will be undertaken to support each priority action. The Implementation Plan will facilitate effective monitoring and reporting of progress against each strategy.
Strategies

This Strategic Plan articulates five key strategies that together form the basis of improvements to the out of home care system. These strategies are reflective of the prevailing themes contained within the numerous inquiries and reports into both the child safety and out of home care systems and align with national standards and efforts. These strategies form the focus of our efforts over the next three years (2017–2019).

They are:

1. **Strategy 1** Leading an Accountable System

   Putting mechanisms in place to oversee the delivery of a coordinated, integrated and accountable system where all partners are aware of their role and contribution.

2. **Strategy 2** Defining and Delivering Quality Care

   Defining the standard for high quality out of home care services and ensuring this standard is consistently delivered.

3. **Strategy 3** Building the Out of Home Care System

   Building a system which delivers the right amount and the right type of care needed by children and young people who can’t live at home.

4. **Strategy 4** Delivering a Safe Out of Home Care System

   Taking a preventive, proactive and participatory approach to keeping children and young people in our care safe.

5. **Strategy 5** Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People in Out of Home Care

   Improving outcomes for children and young people in out of home care by delivering services which meet their specific needs.
Priority Actions

1. **Leading an Accountable System**

*Putting mechanisms in place to oversee the delivery of a coordinated, integrated and accountable system where all partners are aware of their role and contribution.*

Priority Actions:

1. Determine governance and oversight arrangements for the delivery of this Strategic Plan including identifying supports and resources to ensure the realisation of this Strategic Plan.
2. Strengthen oversight and monitoring of purchased out of home care services for efficacy, quality and value.
3. Strengthen working relationships with carers, funded out of home care providers and other government services including clarifying roles and responsibilities of all key partners.
4. Improve governance including oversight and monitoring arrangements for the broader out of home care system.

We will know that our system is accountable when:

- Community and government have confidence that the out of home care system is providing the right services at the right cost.
- Collaboration with non-government out of home care partners is regular and routine – providing efficiencies and improvements to the delivery of out of home care services and functions.

2. **Defining and Delivering Quality Care**

*Defining the standard for high quality out of home care services and ensuring this standard is consistently delivered.*

Priority Actions:

5. Develop and implement an out of home care Quality and Regulatory Framework.
6. Implement systems and processes for consistent data capture and reporting against defined standards.
7. Apply data and support contemporary research to improve the quality and variety of care and intervention options for children and young people.
8. Establish and implement rigorous quality improvement processes including development of an outcomes framework.

We will know we are delivering a quality out of home care system when:

- All services delivering out of home care services understand the standards expected and provide evidence of meeting them.
- Outcomes for children and young people show improvement.
Building the Out of Home Care System

Building a system which delivers the right amount and the right type of care needed by children and young people who can’t live at home.

Priority Actions:

9. Increase placement availability and capacity in the out of home care system.
10. Define the right model for the delivery of family based care.
11. Assess how our operational services and funded services can align to complement reforms introduced through Strong Families Safe Kids and Safe Homes, Safe Families.
12. Review methodologies for expenditure on children and young people in out of home care.
13. Improve structures and systems to support the delivery of services to children and young people in out of home care.

We will know we have built the right out of home care system when:

• Children and young people have stable placements which meet their needs.
• Funding and reimbursement matches the level of assessed need for children and young people.

Delivering a Safe Out of Home Care System

Taking a preventive, proactive and participatory approach to keeping children and young people in our care safe.

Priority Actions:

14. Put in place robust complaint mechanisms to increase the likelihood of harm being discovered, to respond appropriately and to take corrective action to build safety.
15. Establish a Client Adverse Events Unit which will include independent scrutiny of all investigations and reviews.
16. Implement systems and processes to ensure that children and young people are heard and that their views have a genuine impact on system design and decisions about their care.
17. Provide clear and consistent resources for children and young people in out of home care about their rights, and the standard of care they can expect.

We will know our systems are safe when:

• Learnings from complaints and events are applied consciously and systematically to improve the quality and safety of out of home care.
• Children and young people in out of home care report feeling safe and able to participate in decisions which affect their lives.
• Feedback from children, young people and carers is routinely sought, responded to and leads to improvements.
Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People in Out of Home Care

Improving outcomes for children and young people in out of home care by delivering services which meet their specific needs.

Priority Actions:

18. Improve processes for assessing and responding to the needs of children and young people entering, placed in, and leaving out of home care.

19. Review and develop processes for how care responsibilities are met.

20. Utilise resources delivered through Strong Families Safe Kids to support best practice in out of home care.

21. Develop and implement a Learning and Development Framework for staff and carers.

22. Identify the support needs of carers and facilitate their access to required supports and resources.

23. Provide opportunities for carers to be active participants in care planning and implement systems and processes to ensure that carers can be heard and listened to.

We will know we have improved outcomes for children in out of home care when:

- Children and young people report feeling safe, happy, nurtured and stable in out of home care.
- Children and young people have the skills they need and are supported to transition into appropriate arrangements post out of home care.
- Carers report feeling valued and supported in their role.
Development of this Strategic Plan

This Strategic Plan not only addresses the specific recommendations contained in the Commissioner for Children and Young People’s report ‘Children and Young People in Out of Home Care in Tasmania’ but also includes actions from the Child Protection Service Redesign that are linked to out of home care and draws on recommendations and findings contained in key reports and reviews including but not limited to:

Plans and Reports

- The Liberal Plan for Children, Young People and Families.
- DHHS Corporate Plan.
- Strengthening Child Safe Organisation, Commissioner for Children and Young People.
- Children and Young People’s Unique Experiences of Family Violence, Commissioner for Children and Young People September 2016.
- The Quality and Safety Framework for Tasmania’s Funded Community Sector.
- Tasmanian Foster and Kinship Carers Survey 2015.

Reviews and Investigations

- Findings from the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse.
- Auditor General Inquiry into OoHC 2011.
- Coronial Findings.

Standards and Frameworks

- National Clinical Assessment Framework for Children and Young People in Out of Home Care.
- Australian Service Excellence Standards.
- Signs of Safety Quality Assurance System.

Other
