

The future of child protection and care: fact sheet

New operating model:

A new operating model will create a single point of accountability to ensure one agency is responsible for the long term welfare of vulnerable children. Currently funding, strategy and services are scattered across multiple agencies.

The new operating model, which will be in place by the end of March 2017, will put children at the centre of the system and will ensure their voice is heard as part of the decision making process. It will have five core services – prevention, intensive intervention, care support, youth justice and transition support.

An actuarial valuation model will be developed to ensure interventions are based on evidence of what works and will look at the lifelong outcomes for children and young people.

The agency will be able to directly purchase services for young people from other government agencies, DHBs, NGOs and other specialist service providers to get children and young people in care the support they need. Work will begin immediately on what targeted funding can be reallocated from other agencies ahead of Budget 2017.

The agency will have a broader remit than the current CYF, including a focus on early intervention, prevention, recognising trauma and the transition into early adulthood.

Age of care:

The age of care will rise to include young people up to their 18th birthday. This will be progressed in the first piece of legislation.

Further work is being done to give young people the option to stay in care up to age 21, with some support up to age 25.

Ministers have also agreed to investigate raising the youth justice age to include 17 year-olds.

Structure:

The Ministry of Social Development and the State Services Commission are doing further work on what structure and leadership will best support the new operating model and Ministers will report back in May 2016.

Advocacy:

A new independent youth advocacy service is being established in partnership with the philanthropic sector.

The service will:

- provide advocacy for children and young people in care, and
- facilitate the election of a permanent Youth Advisory Panel of care-experienced young people

Caregivers:

The development of a caregiver recruitment strategy is already underway and will be in place by March 2017 alongside enhanced support for caregivers, including some increased financial support.

A strategy to engage all New Zealanders on what they can do for vulnerable children and the first national awareness campaign will be completed by March 2017.

Workforce:

The new model will need a broader range of skills, and we are exploring provisions to allow more professionals to perform functions under the Children, Young Persons and Their Families (CYP&F) Act. This will be included in the first piece of legislation, subject to final Cabinet approval.

Oversight:

The Office of the Children's Commissioner will continue to monitor and provide independent reporting.

More work is being done to review the responsibilities for the Office of the Children's Commissioner so that it fits with the new system.

The Vulnerable Children's Board will be expanded to include an independent chair, at least one Māori member and up to 2 other independent members as well as the Chief Executives of the Ministries of Social Development, Justice, Health, Education, Corrections, Te Puni Kokiri and the Commissioner of Police.

Changes to legislation:

The first piece of legislation will be passed by the end of 2016 and will include changes to:

- Raise the age of care
- Establish an independent advocacy service for young people in care

Work is also being done to explore allowing a wider group of professionals to work with children and their families. This is also expected to be included in the first piece of legislation, subject to final Cabinet approval.

The second piece of legislation will be passed by May 2017 and is expected to include changes to:

- ensure the system is child-centred

- Create a new accountability framework
- Give children and young people with disabilities the same rights as others
- Enhance information sharing abilities under the Children Young Persons & their Families Act.

Further work:

By May 2016

- The State Services and Social Development Ministers will report back on
 - the Vulnerable Children's Board's revised Terms of Reference.
 - the future organisational structure and leadership of the agency.

By 30 June 2016

- The Ministers of Justice and Social Development will report back on raising the youth justice age to include 17-year-olds.
- The Social Development Minister will report back on
 - creating a right to remain in care up to age 21, with some support continuing to age 25
 - improving information sharing provisions within the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989
 - repealing separate disability provisions to ensure children and young people with disabilities have the same rights in care as others

By July 2016

- A detailed transformation programme will be reported back to the Social Development Minister and the Ministerial Oversight Group.

By October 2016

- The Social Development Minister will report back on:
 - The responsibilities of the Office of the Children's Commissioner.
 - The development of National Care Standards, to clearly set out the minimum level of care children and young people can expect.
 - The development of the actuarial valuation model for vulnerable children and young people
- The Education and Social Development Ministers will report back on whether some special education functions should be transferred to the agency.

Funding:

Set up and initial funding will be allocated in Budget 2016 and held in contingency. A further bid will be made as part of Budget 2017, once details of reallocation from other agencies have been established, and further work on the operating model has been completed by the transformation team.