

# KEEP THEM SAFE

A shared approach  
to child wellbeing

## CHILD WELLBEING UNITS

*Keep Them Safe: A shared approach to child wellbeing is the NSW Government's response to the Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW. Keep Them Safe recognises the importance of the wellbeing of all children and young people, with the aim of providing appropriate support to families earlier, to prevent children and young people from requiring statutory child protection intervention. To achieve this, Keep Them Safe encourages families, communities, government agencies, and non-government organisations to work together to support children, young people, and families.*

Child Wellbeing Units (CWUs) were established in January 2010 in response to the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW.

### Where are the CWUs?

CWUs operate in the government agencies that account for the majority of reports to the Community Services Child Protection Helpline: The NSW Police Force, Department of Education and Communities, NSW Health (including Local Health Districts, affiliated health services, and certain general practitioners),

and the Department of Family and Community Services (Housing; and Ageing, Disability and Home Care).

### CWU functions

CWUs:

- help agency mandatory reporters identify the level of suspected risk to a child or young person, including whether matters require a report to the Community Services Child Protection Helpline
- provide advice to agency mandatory reporters about possible service responses by the agency or other services to assist children, young people, and families, and in some cases initiate direct referrals
- drive better alignment and coordination of agency service systems, to enable better responses to vulnerable children, young people, and families.

### When should you call the CWU?

If you are a mandatory reporter in an agency with a CWU you should call your CWU:

- where you require advice and assistance to determine whether your concerns about a child or young person meet the suspected risk of significant harm threshold (especially where you are unsure, after consulting the Mandatory Reporter Guide)
- where the Mandatory Reporter Guide advises you to do so
- where you have a safety, welfare or wellbeing concern and you want to identify whether another child wellbeing agency has logged concerns or is working with a particular child, young person or family, and whether this information impacts on the level of risk
- for advice and assistance to plan actions, referrals, and services to



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support the child, young person, and their family

- for assistance with using the Mandatory Reporter Guide and/or information exchange provisions.

### What to expect when you call

As a government agency worker you can also expect that the CWU will:

- document your concerns for the safety, welfare, and wellbeing of a child or young person where a level of risk is identified. (This will include recording details about the child or young person, your concerns, your name, workplace, and role with the child or family. The CWU will also ask you to consent to your contact details being shared with other agencies as needed)
- provide advice about when it is appropriate to report suspected risk of significant harm concerns to the Community Services Child Protection Helpline. If a child or young person is considered to be at suspected risk of significant harm following an assessment, the CWU will generally advise you to report the matter to the Child Protection Helpline. When needed, the CWU may make reports directly to the Helpline

- provide advice and assistance about using the Mandatory Reporter Guide
- provide advice about the use of Chapter 16A of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* to share information or coordinate services between prescribed bodies
- share information relevant to the safety, welfare, and wellbeing of children and young people with other agencies, including Community Services, in line with information sharing and case coordination legislative provisions. Each CWU has limited access to other agencies' CWU records on WellNet, the shared CWU database, as well as to the Community Services KiDS system, to assist with sharing information to determine risk. CWUs document concerns that do not reach the statutory threshold, to help ensure that these concerns once identified are responded to, do not get lost in the system, and are available to identify any cumulative risk across agencies
- help identify how you may respond and what support services may be available for the child, young person or their family within the agency. If your agency is not in a position to

- offer a service directly to the child or family in order to address an identified need, the CWU provides advice to mandatory reporters about possible referral options (both government and non-government, including Family Referral Services)
- give feedback about decisions and actions taken by the CWU – including when a report is made to the Child Protection Helpline following a Cumulative Risk Appraisal (normally where the worker has an ongoing role).

### Other work done by CWUs

CWUs also contribute to the alignment and coordination of the service system. They do this by working within their own agencies to assist in the coordination of service responses to children, young people, and families. In addition, they work with each other as well as other government agencies and non-government organisations on initiatives to improve coordination and alignment of service responses.

### Further information

- Contact your agency's Child Wellbeing Unit
- Visit [www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au](http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au)