

Workload Management Guide for Child Safety Service Centres

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Executive Summary

Recent decades have seen huge changes in Queensland's child protection system, most significantly the introduction of comprehensive new legislation in 1999 and the implementation of recommendations from the Crime and Misconduct Commission inquiry of 2003.

These events have had impacts such as increased staffing, the development of a comprehensive practice manual and foundational training for child safety officers (CSOs).

While these developments reflect an organisation striving to meet the needs of vulnerable clients, the challenge remains for Child Safety Services staff to deliver services to the state's most vulnerable children within a context of constrained resources and increasing workloads.

Consequently, an essential component of child protection service delivery is successful workload management; ensuring the right work is being done by the right people in order to meet legislative and organisational service delivery standards.

The Workload Management Guide for Child Safety Service Centres (the Guide) has been developed by the joint Together Queensland/Management Workload Review Project Working Group as part of the Workload Review Project initiative negotiated in the State Government Departments Certified Agreement 2009. The Guide has been developed to address a critical need to ensure that child safety officers are allocated reasonable workloads that in turn facilitate best outcomes for children.

The Guide has been trialled in 8 Child Safety Service Centres and subject to an initial review. It is intended that it will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, leading, over time, to the development of more sophisticated workload management tools. The Guide does not represent a mathematical approach to workload management, but rather, it provides an indicative approach that relies on the interpretation of a range of factors to determine appropriate responses to managing workload in child protection.

This guide outlines the following principles at the core of successful workload management in child protection:

- **Shared responsibility** – managing workload is a shared organisational responsibility and can be achieved by utilising existing reporting structures and staff development mechanisms.
- **Duty of care to children** – the best interests of the child are facilitated by effective workload management.
- **Duty of care to staff** – service delivery staff have a right to a safe working environment including allocation of manageable workloads.
- **Ongoing core business** – workload management is an ongoing process that forms a part of the core business of Child Safety Services.
- **Reasonable workload** – effective workload management within Child Safety Services relies on the adoption of reasonable workload benchmarks and effective management practices.
- **Responsible resource management** – staff and management are committed to maintaining and taking responsibly for the effective management of all departmental resources (including people and facilities).

The Guide is offered as a sharing of practice wisdom by experienced CSSC managers and it is anticipated that each element of the guide will be of varying importance to each Child Safety Service Centre (CSSC) manager, team leader and staff members. It is envisaged that the Guide will provide options for management teams and service delivery staff to determine service delivery capacity (and the capability of individual workers), and will guide the allocation of resources within a service centre. It is anticipated that workload management tools and guidelines will continue to be refined and developed.

The Guide and tools that it contains may be used in a variety of means, beyond its original intention, to support child protection service delivery, for example:

- as induction information for new staff
- to train new and aspiring team leaders and managers
- to inform service centre support and development.

Workload management concepts and tools presented within this guide include:

- workload management flowchart: representing the interrelated components of workload management
- values, leadership and culture: outlining the context for effective management
- CSSC environmental scan and action plan: a diagnostic tool to assist in understanding and addressing CSSC dynamics
- reasonable workload benchmarks: caseload ranges to be used as indicators of workload thresholds for Child Safety Officers
- workload allocation review: a model for identifying resource allocation options
- predictive planning framework: a framework for managing and planning work in predictable cycles in advance to promote a non-reactive culture of performance
- escalation process – and agreed pathway for escalating workload issues

The development of this guide is consistent with the desire of the department to continue striving toward best practice for child protection. With this, and other developments, it is certain that further change and innovation will occur in response to changing expectations from both internal and external stakeholders.

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Section 1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Recent decades have seen huge changes in Queensland's child protection system, most significantly the introduction of comprehensive new legislation in 1999 and the implementation of recommendations from the Crime and Misconduct Commission inquiry of 2003.

These significant events have led to increased staffing, the development of a comprehensive practice manual, foundational training for child safety officers (CSOs), the creation of a multifaceted service delivery structure, and the development of a range of innovative programs to support service delivery.

While these developments reflect an organisation striving to meet the needs of vulnerable clients, growth through experience, and positioning for the future, the challenge remains for Child Safety Services staff to deliver services to the state's most vulnerable children within a context of constrained resources and increasing workloads.

Consequently, an essential component of child protection service delivery is successful workload management; ensuring the right work is being done by the right people in order to meet legislative and organisational service delivery standards.

1.2. Workload management principles

Within the Department of Communities, Child Safety Services delivers protective services to the state's most vulnerable children within a context of constrained resources and increasing demand. Consequently, an essential component of the department's role in delivering these services is effective workload management.

Effective workload management will facilitate the right work being done in order to meet legislative and organisational service delivery standards. Workload management is underpinned by the following **principles**:

- **Shared responsibility** – Managing workload is a shared organisational responsibility and can be achieved by utilising existing reporting structures and staff development mechanisms.
- **Duty of care to children** – The best interests of the child are facilitated by effective workload management.
- **Duty of care to staff** – Service delivery staff have a right to a safe working environment including allocation of manageable workloads.
- **Ongoing core business** – Workload management is an ongoing process that forms a part of the core business of Child Safety Services.
- **Reasonable workload** – Effective workload management within Child Safety Services relies on the adoption of reasonable caseload benchmarks and effective management practices.
- **Responsible resource management** – Staff and management are committed to maintaining and taking responsibly for the effective management of all departmental resources (including people and facilities).

1.3. Workload Management Guide - Purpose

The Workload Management Guide for Child Safety Service Centres (the Guide) has been developed by a joint Together Queensland (formerly Queensland Public Sector Union) / Management Workload Review Project Working Group as part of the Workload Review Project (WRP) initiative. The WRP initiative was negotiated as part of the State Government Departments Certified Agreement 2009.

The Guide has been designed to be a resource for the management of workload in Child Safety Services Centres, the Department of Communities, and it was created to address a critical need to ensure that Child Safety Officers (CSOs) are allocated reasonable workloads that in turn facilitate best outcomes for children.

It is intended to be used by Child Safety Service Centre (CSSC) managers, team leaders, service delivery staff and regional leadership staff to provide a basis for workload management discussions at a range of levels.

The Guide and tools that it contains may also be used in a variety of means, beyond its original intention, to support child protection service delivery, for example:

- as induction information for new staff
- to train new and aspiring team leaders and managers
- to inform service centre support and development.

1.4. Workload Management Guide - Overview

Workload management information, tools and frameworks presented within this guide are:

- Method for managing workload
 - **Workload management flowchart** representing the interrelated components of workload management:
 - Operational environment
 - Service delivery
 - Ongoing review
 - Escalation processes
- Operational environment:
 - **Workload management – are you ready?** – foundations for creating an effective organisational culture for child protection service provision including:
 - Values, leadership and culture
 - Understanding CSSC roles in workload management
 - Supervision in CSSCs
 - Capability development
 - **CSSC environmental scan and action plan** – a diagnostic tool for ongoing review of effective operation of CSSCs including workload management
- Service Delivery and Ongoing Review:
 - **Reasonable caseload benchmarks*** and principles – caseload ranges that are to be used as indicators of workload thresholds for caseload carrying staff, and principles to consider in the application of these
 - **Workload allocation review** – a process for reviewing workload that takes into account worker capability and case intensity (based on joint management team/worker review)
 - **Predictive planning framework** – a framework for managing and planning work in predictable cycles in advance to promote a responsive, non-reactive culture of performance
- Escalation:
 - **Escalation process** – an agreed pathway for escalating workload issues.

*The reasonable caseload benchmarks are intended to be used as a basis for workload management. This guide provides information to support the application of reasonable caseload benchmarks, the escalation process, and the other tools and frameworks provided, to maximise the effectiveness of workload management in Child Safety Service Centres.

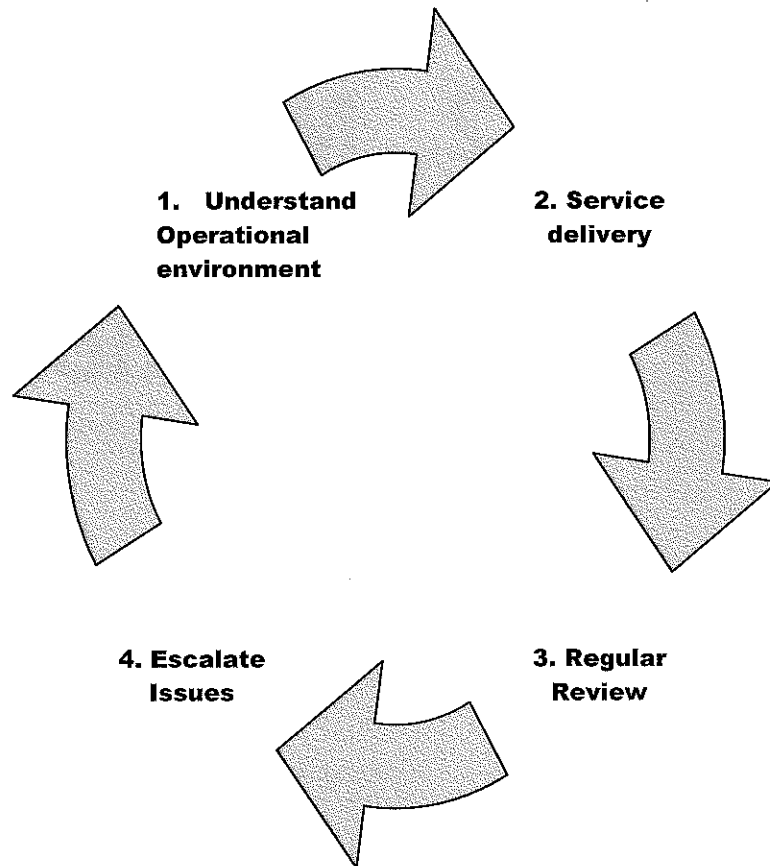
Section 2. Method for managing workload

2.1 Workload management flowchart

The method for managing workload outlined in this guide is a set of systematic processes that considers factors relating to the organisational environment as well as identifying practical tools to support workload management that can be applied to CSSCs. The flowchart below gives an overview of workload management and the key components for consideration.

Each stage identified in the workload management flowchart is briefly outlined in this section with further details and associated tools provided from sections 3 to 5.

Figure 1: Workload management flowchart



2.2 Operational environment

Maintaining high quality service delivery in the child protection setting is challenging. The volume of work, the sensitive and complex nature of the work, and the amount of information that service delivery staff need to access to meet organisational expectations, are some of the challenges faced by frontline staff.

Understanding the context within which CSSCs operate, and knowing what contributes to an effective service delivery environment can support effective workload management in this challenging context.

Section 3 of this guide provides foundational information regarding key elements of the organisational context that influence the workload management culture within CSSCs. This information is based on practice wisdom, research and departmental guidelines and includes discussion of the following elements in relation to CSSCs:

- Values, leadership and culture
- Understanding CSSC roles in workload management
- Supervision in CSSCs
- Capability development

Also provided in Section 3 is an assessment tool for identifying CSSC strengths and priorities in relation to six core elements of a CSSC operating environment:

- CSSC environmental scan and action plan

This tool was developed specifically for Queensland Child Safety Service Centres and can be used as a diagnostic tool for ongoing review of effective operation of CSSCs including workload management.

2.3 Service delivery and Ongoing Review

Facilitating effective service delivery in a CSSC can be supported by:

- understanding the Child Protection Service System
- applying reasonable caseload benchmarks
- understanding case intensity
- understanding worker capability
- undertaking appropriate planning

Section 4 provides further details and tools for applying these elements including:

- **Reasonable caseload benchmarks** for Queensland Child Safety Service Centres developed by a joint Together Queensland / management working party. These benchmarks are provided at section 4.2. (Pg 30) accompanied by principles for application and information regarding the service delivery context to which they apply.
- The **Workload allocation review** tool is provided at section 4.3. (Pg 32) as a model for reviewing case intensity and worker capability in order to facilitate sound decision making in allocating cases within the CSSC. The workload allocation review tool has been developed over time and has proven to be applicable to the Queensland Child Safety Services context.

- **Predictive planning framework** (Section 4.4. Pg 36)) elaborates on the view that child protection work can be predicted and responded to in a planned, non-reactive way. Planning is essential to establishing an environment that supports effective workload management in child safety service delivery. A case study of how the predictive planning framework has been applied in a CSSC is also included.

Ongoing review of the nature of the work and service delivery capacity is another essential element of effective workload management and is discussed further at section 4.5. (Pg 43). This section explores the value of a regular review cycle being incorporated into the management of the CSSC and how workload management tools provide valuable information for the review process.

2.4 Escalating issues

Workload management will only be effective if there is organisational support around appropriately escalating issues. This is essential to ensure client needs are met and to ensure worker care, and links to the principles that are foundational to successful workload management, in particular, duty of care to children and staff, and shared responsibility (see section 1.1.).

Workload issues arise for a variety of reasons including:

- unexpected increases in demand due to a range of influences (changing demographics, natural disaster)
- team based staffing issues (leave, illness, training commitments)
- CSSC and / or regional resource allocation issues (need to review allocation with changes in demand)
- policy and procedure changes (new legislation, information systems).

Subsequently responses to workload management issues can be many and varied.

A process for escalating issues, including ideas for responding to workload issues, endorsed by departmental staff and Together Queensland is provided in section 5.1. Pg 46: **Escalating workload management issues in Child Safety Services.**

The process for escalating issues commences with the worker identifying a problem and discussing this with their team leader or the team leader identifying issues and escalating to the CSSC manager. Workload issues should be escalated to the appropriate level according to the type of solution required and this can only be determined by communication about the issues between management and staff.

Section 3. Operational environment

3.1. Workload Management – Are you ready?

3.1.1. Values, leadership and culture

A key element in providing high quality intervention services to children and their families is to have a culture that will attract, retain and develop people who are motivated to work with family complexity and face the daily realities of working with children who have been harmed or neglected, or are at risk.

Research indicates strong connections between an individual's values, the fit with organisational values, job satisfaction and subsequent retention of resilient staff in child protection services. Building a culture of shared values is the foundation for creating commitment to the role and therefore supporting effective workload management.

Values

Values and beliefs inform and guide the actions taken every day by service delivery staff to support the best outcomes for children. They are important because actions determine culture and culture will influence the quality of service delivery and ultimately contribute to meeting the goals of the organisation.

Converting values to workplace behaviours allows the values to become living, breathing actions that can be measured, rewarded and improved. Values, and consequently culture are demonstrated by:

- behaviours (language and actions)
- systems (mentoring, feedback, performance and learning, and administration)
- symbols (rewards, clutter free offices, equitable distribution of resources, and well-being choices).

Leadership and culture

It is the leadership role to build a culture that will promote effective service delivery and this process can be facilitated by a cultural audit. Leaders/managers can ask a range of questions in order to establish the current culture of the workgroup. These may include:

- How do we see the values of the organisation in our workplace?
- Do I have an awareness of my key values?
- Is there a good fit between the two?
- What does my behaviour say about my values?
- Is diversity valued in this workgroup?
- How do I balance my values with those of my clients?
- What does my behaviour say about learning development of my staff?
- What feedback would my colleagues provide about my actions that may assist me to better understand my values?

The answers to these questions will help determine what the team culture is, for example, is it a positive culture, a learning culture, a culture within which people accept personal responsibility and accountability, a service focused culture, and so on? Reviewing the CSSC culture contributes to the overall scan of the CSSC operating environment (see Environmental scan and action plan in section 3.2.1).

Benefits

The benefits that can be achieved by creating a positive, values based culture within a CSSC have been demonstrated and include:

- low staff turnover resulting in higher levels of experience
- promotion of creativity and innovation
- high levels of staff satisfaction
- low absenteeism
- critical situations are dealt with positively
- workgroups remain focused on the needs of the child
- working together to resolve issues is facilitated
- building a trusting environment in which staff can integrate experiences and build resilience.

If the vision of the organisation is to increase the safety, confidence and wellbeing of children who can then contribute to society, then a positive culture that supports the retention and development of service delivery staff, enabling them to face the daily challenges and complexities with knowledge, skill, courage and resilience, is critical.

There is a wealth of research available to CSSC managers who would like further information around the development of leadership and culture. This research includes identification of leadership models relevant to the child protection service delivery context and can be found in the Bibliography (Attachment 3).

3.1.2. Roles in workload management

While roles and responsibilities may differ, workload management is everyone's responsibility in child safety services delivery. Understanding your role and responsibilities within an organisation is essential to carrying out the duties of a role effectively and safely. This section outlines responsibilities for the key service delivery roles in CSSCs, and provides key questions for consideration in preparing for these responsibilities. Questions for consideration in the checklists are not intended to be exhaustive. Also included in Table 1 is the responsibilities of team leaders contrasted with those of managers in Child Safety Service Centres.

Child Safety Officers

The role of child safety officers in workload management

- You are responsible for:
 - planning and prioritising your work
 - monitoring your progress
 - discussing workload issues with your line manager
 - engaging in the supervision process

Child safety officer checklist

- Have you discussed your roles and duties with your TL?
- Do you have access to Microsoft Outlook, ICMS, intranet and internet (and are you using these)?
- Are you aware of infrastructure and resources (internal and external) that you can draw on to support you in your work?
- Have you completed your online induction including ICMS training?
- Are you aware of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework and training package?
- Have you attended Phase 2 of Entry Level Training and / or do you allocate time each week to complete CSO Entry Level Training activities?
- Do you have a supervision schedule set up with your TL (and do you attend)?
- Have you scheduled in time during supervision to discuss CSO Entry Level Training activities and / or other learning development activities?
- Are you aware of your own signs and symptoms of stress?
- Are you using appropriate mechanisms to manage your wellbeing?
- Are you aware of the peer support program?
- Do you know what to do if there are issues with your line manager which impede your effective work well being?

Team leaders and CSSC managers

The role of team leaders and CSSC managers in workload management:

- you are responsible and accountable for:
 - workload management: assisting staff in prioritising work and allocating work across teams in order to meet changing priorities
 - a duty of care towards service delivery staff and clients in considering workload management issues
 - providing management and leadership in child safety services

- knowing how to manage people and, equally, knowing the business
- what is happening in the office and therefore responsible for knowing what is happening in the office, for example, workload, behaviours, issues, resources, evaluating staff capacity etcetera
- modelling appropriate approaches to work, for example, prioritising and committing to supervision, and working within standard hours where possible
- for utilising specialist staff and other organisational supports appropriately
- ensuring that CSOs undertaking Entry Level Training are provided with sufficient time to complete mandatory workplace learning activities
- providing opportunities for staff to participate in learning development activities
- escalating workload issues to senior management.

Figure 4: Team leader and manager roles in workload management

Managers:	Team Leaders:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set expectations of a practice culture that supports effective service delivery • understand the organisational environment and the role of the CSSC in achieving organisational outcomes • understand work requirements and available resources • facilitate regular reviews of workload allocation (regular reviews with the management team) • support team leaders to achieve goals in their area of responsibility • provide regular and constructive supervision for team leaders • escalate issues to the regional level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implement expectations regarding the practice culture as set by the manager • understand requirements and recognise when these are not met • provide feedback to managers regarding work requirements, worker capability and service delivery gaps • facilitate safe workloads for staff and take into consideration learning development activities • support caseload carrying staff to meet caseload requirements • provide positive guidance to caseload carrying staff • provide constructive and regular supervision to caseload carrying staff • provide time for CSOs to complete Entry Level Training activities each week • engage in regular and constructive supervision with the manager • escalate issues to manager.

Team leader and manager checklist

- Do I know my staff?
- Do I know my resources?
- Do I know my environment?
- Are my staff adequately trained?
- Are my staff getting time allocated to complete CSO Entry Level Training activities?
- Do my staff know their legislative responsibilities?
- Are my staff working too many hours?
- What stage am I in my development as a manager/team leader (new, consolidating, or experienced)?
- What are my support and development needs in the management role?
- How are my decisions impacting on workload/staff?
- Are my decisions facilitating good outcomes for clients?
- Are my staff at capacity?
- What are my performance indicators (for example; sick leave, turnover, grievances), and what are they telling me?
- Is supervision happening?
- Are my staff getting time to undertake learning development opportunities?
- Am I aware of ICMS data, and what it is highlighting for focused attention?

Specialist and administration staff

Specialist and administration staff within CSSCs include: Senior Practitioners, Child Safety Support Officers, Court Coordinators, Family Group Meeting Convenors, Scan Coordinators, Records Officers, Business Services Managers and Administration Officers. All of these staff members have a particular role to play in supporting direct service delivery to clients.

The role of specialist and administration staff in workload management

- you are responsible for:
 - planning and prioritising your work and escalating workload management issues
 - understanding your role and how this interfaces with other CSSC roles
 - working within a team to support child protection service delivery
 - engaging in the supervision process and discussing issues with your line manager.

Specialist staff checklist

- Have you discussed your role and duties with your team leader or manager?
- Are you aware of how your role supports CSOs and other CSSC staff in delivering services to clients?
- Do CSOs and other CSSC staff understand your role?
- Are you aware of infrastructure and resources (internal and external) that you can draw on to support you in your work?
- Do you discuss your learning development requirements with your supervisor?
- Do you understand your own needs in terms of workplace health and safety?

3.1.3. Supervision

The Child Safety Practice Manual identifies one hour per fortnight as the minimum requirement for formal supervision to occur. Supervision can be both formal and informal and establishing a supervision routine should be negotiated between the team leader and the worker according to current needs. Informal supervision is not a substitute for formal supervision.

While supervision is a forum for regular case discussion, and the opportunity to develop case management strategies, it is also a time for:

- identifying learning and development needs
- clarifying what is expected
- planning work activities
- linking these conversations to achievement and capability planning.

Formal supervision must be provided to CSOs and must include time for discussion of learning activities for CSOs undertaking Entry Level Training.

To maximise the benefit of supervision it is important that workers are clear about the key issues that need to be addressed regarding cases and achievement and capability planning.

Questions to consider in preparing for supervision:

- What level is my understanding of the legislative framework (confident, not confident, need development)?
- Am I confident in navigating the practice manual and applying the practice framework?
- How am I going with integrating my personal goals and ethics with the aspirations and constraints of the department?
- How confident am I in the role of professional practitioner?
- Am I developing meaningful relationships with my clients?
- Am I working my scheduled hours?
- Are there elements of particular cases that are new to me and that I may require training on?
- How am I coping? Do I know what signs of stress to look for in myself?
- Have there been recent case events that I am unable to resolve?
- How is this job changing me?
- Am I confident working with cultural diversity and are there elements I may require training on?
- Am I getting regular formal supervision (including time for CSO Entry Level Training activities)?

Supervision provides the forum to facilitate the first stage in the escalation process for workload issues, that is, that workload is regularly discussed between the CSO and team leader in supervision (see Section 5.1. Pg 46).

3.1.4. Capability development

The reasonable caseload benchmarks in this guide have been identified as reasonable workload indicators for employees who have the core capabilities required for the role. Discussions relating to performance and workload management consider the employee's current and required capabilities as part of the review and assessment processes.

The Queensland Public Service Capability Leadership Framework (QPS CLF) is a comprehensive framework for identifying behaviours required across five core capabilities foundational to carrying out duties within the public service. Behavioural descriptors are provided for classification levels within the public service and can be referred to when staff and management are reviewing individual capabilities to assess developmental needs.

Core capabilities include the capabilities outlined in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework, which aims to improve the cultural capability of staff in order to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.

Managers, team leaders and staff work together to identify the core capabilities required for their role and how these capabilities relate to the performance indicators outlined in the benchmarks table.

Elements of capability development that are identified in this process are then reflected in an employee's achievement and capability plan. The relevant capabilities may also correlate with the skills required for an employee to satisfy progression requirements.

3.2 Operational environment – resources and systems

Effective workload management requires information gathering and sharing. Service centre managers and staff need to know the nature of their clients, organisational expectations of service delivery, resources available to them, and how the service centre is operating in relation to particular indicators.

The service centre manager is the key staff member responsible for ensuring a holistic awareness of the operating environment (see section 3.1.2: Roles in workload management). Practical methods can be applied to assist service centre managers to evaluate office functioning including:

- interpreting departmental data (for example, staff satisfaction surveys, exit surveys, workforce planning scorecards, and operational performance reviews)
- less tangible methods such as observed office dynamics.

Being aware of office performance and dynamics can support service centre managers to proactively manage office issues and respond to workload management demands. This section provides a diagnostic tool – the CSSC Environmental Scan - that outlines key elements of the CSSC operating environment, and provides indicators and key questions for examining how these elements apply in CSSCs. Areas of achievement and areas for development can be identified and recorded, along with ideas for addressing priorities.

3.2.1. CSSC environmental scan and action plan

The CSSC environmental scan at pages 22 to 24 identifies six key elements of the CSSC operating environment, and provides indicators and sample key questions for examining how these elements apply in CSSCs. This tool can support CSSC managers to proactively manage office issues and respond to workload management demands by assisting to:

- identify areas of CSSC achievement
- identify areas for CSSC development.

This tool can also be used by Team Leaders and other CSSC staff as a foundation for discussions around:

- identifying connections between service delivery and broader organisational goals
- articulating workload management pressure points
- organisational engagement
- priorities for action

The key questions provided are not intended to be exhaustive and CSSC staff are encouraged to develop other questions relevant to their local circumstances.

The action plan on page 25 is a template for noting areas of CSSC achievement and priorities for CSSC development, and the proposed strategies to address these priorities. Some resources that can assist in exploring some of the key elements are provided below:

<u>Values through behaviour</u>	<u>Professional Supervision (from Child Safety Practice Manual)</u>	<u>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework and Training</u>
<u>Strategic framework</u>	<u>Child safety practice framework (includes integrating and understanding the practice framework)</u>	<u>Achievement and capability planning</u>
<u>Regional and business unit plans</u>		

Figure 2: CSSC environmental scan

CSSC ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN		
Element	Indicator	Sample key questions (these are not exhaustive)
Leadership and governance	Values, vision and goals	What are they and how do you know if they are clearly understood by all staff?
	Governance structures	Are they in place (staff, team and management meetings)? Do people understand and use them appropriately?
	Culture	How would you describe the culture of the CSSC? What are some of the indicators? Does the service delivery culture support and promote good practice?
	Celebration and reward	How are achievements celebrated? How do achievement celebrations contribute to staff engagement and motivation?
	Planning and review	Is there a regular planning and review cycle? Who participates in this? Are actions identified and implemented?
People	Roles	Do staff have a clear understanding of their own and others' roles and responsibilities? How is this communicated to new staff?
	Learning and development	Have staff completed induction and basic training for their role? Are Achievement and Capability Plans completed and implemented? What are the learning and development needs across the CSSC? Have staff attended Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural capability training? Is time set aside for CSO Entry Level Training activities? What are the knowledge strengths or challenges among CSSC staff members?
	Supervision	Do service delivery staff receive regular supervision? Are supervision agreements in place? Is supervision covering the four elements of professional supervision? How do we support our supervisors in their role?
	Staff retention	Who is staying and who is leaving? Why? Do we complete exit interviews?
	Leave	Are we actively managing planned and unplanned leave (recreation, sick, flex, toil)? Are there patterns and what do they tell us?
	Workplace health and safety	Is this issue a regular meeting agenda item? Do we all know who our high risk clients are? Do we have safety plans in place where required? Do we effectively undertake risk assessments before travelling/engaging with clients?

CSSC ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN		
Element	Indicator	Sample key questions (these are not exhaustive)
Partnerships	Internal partners	Who are they are (regional office, policy, human resources, complaints etc) and what do they offer?
	Key government and non-government partners including recognised entities	Who are our government and non-government partners? What are the key issues for these agencies? Do we have key contacts?
	Foster and kinship carers	How are we supporting these partners? How does this link to placement capacity?
	SCAN	Are there any actions we need to take as the lead agency to improve SCAN efficacy?
	Service system	What key services are available in our area to support our clients? What are the gaps?
Quality practice	The practice framework	Is the practice framework understood and utilised in supervision?
	The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework	Is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework understood and utilised in day to day practice?
	Senior practitioner role	Is this role supporting quality practice? Is this role clearly defined and understood within the CSSC?
	Case Plans	Do we have case plans in place for our clients? Do case plans meet SMART Model?
	Permanency decisions	Are timely decisions made about permanency?
Reflective practice	Is reflective practice evident in the CSSC? Is our practice culturally responsive? How do we know?	

CSSC ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Element	Indicator	Sample key questions (these are not exhaustive)
Performance measures	Key priority indicators	Does the management team know what they are?
	Goals	Are there clearly understood goals? How are goals formulated and reviewed and do they align with broader organisational goals? Who participates in setting CSSC goals?
	Strategies	Are there strategies in place to identify and address issues? Is there differentiation between PO2, PO3, and PO4 workers in terms of workload allocation or service delivery roles?
Budget and resources	Budget	Have we participated in proactive budget planning which focuses on the needs of children and staff support needs?
	Placement capacity	Are we providing and receiving feedback from PSU's regarding placement options, referral processes, and other issues?
	Knowledge of resources	Do all staff members know what the office resources are? How is this information shared?
	Physical resources	Are cars, computers and other equipment in good repair? Are there sufficient physical resources to meet service delivery requirements?

Figure 3: CSSC action plan

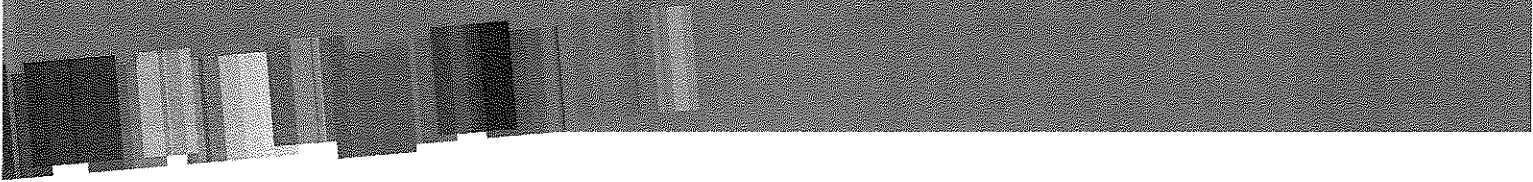
CSSC _____

Date: _____

This template can be used to note areas of CSSC achievement and detail priorities for CSSC development, and the proposed strategies to address these priorities.

CSSC ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN - ACTION PLAN	
Element	Achievements, priorities and plans
Leadership and governance	
People	
Partnerships	
Quality practice	
Performance	
Budget and other resources	

Review date: _____



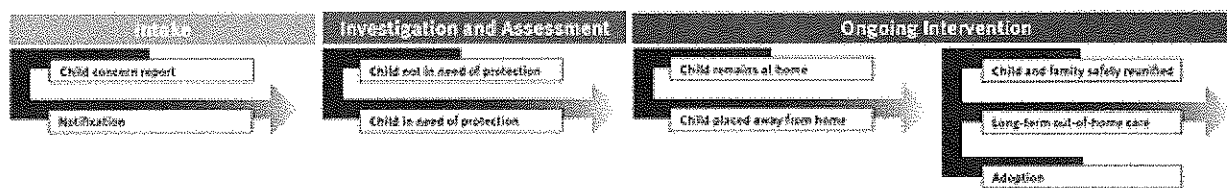
Section 4. Service delivery and ongoing review

4.1. Service delivery context of workload management

4.1.1. Child Protection System Framework

The child protection system framework for Child Safety Services spans a range of work from intake to investigation and assessment to ongoing intervention (Figure 4). All elements of this system are required to provide an effective response to children and young people who are at risk of and/or experience abuse and neglect.

Figure 2 – Child Protection System Framework



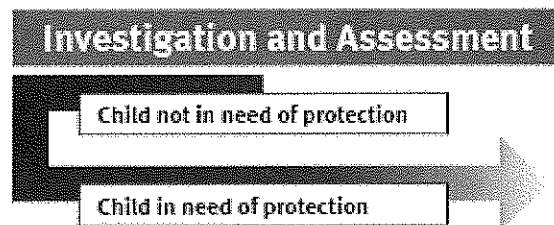
4.1.2. Child Safety Service Centre focus

Child Safety Service Centres focus on delivering services through **investigation and assessment and ongoing intervention**, therefore this guide is focused on workload management within these elements.

Investigations and assessment

The aim of investigation and assessment is to determine whether a child is in need of protection and ongoing departmental intervention.

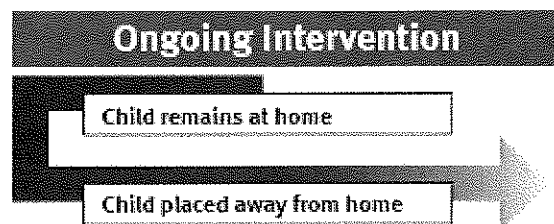
The child and their family are visited, information is gathered from them and other sources, and an assessment of harm and risk is made.



Ongoing Intervention

The aim of ongoing intervention is to reduce the likelihood of a child experiencing future harm.

Ongoing intervention is **required** for a child in need of protection and a case plan with intervention goals and actions is developed to meet the child's protection and care needs. Whereas for a child not in need of protection or an unborn child assessed to be in need of protection after birth, ongoing intervention is **offered** to the family or pregnant woman.



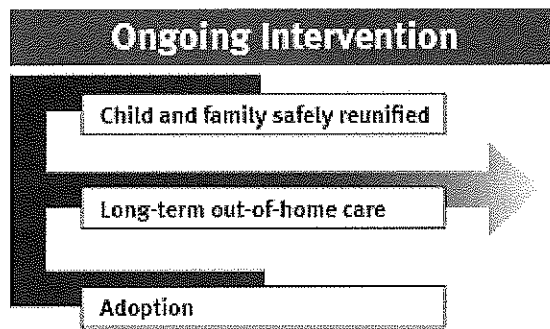
There are **three types** of ongoing intervention cases:

- intervention with parental agreement
- intervention with a child protection order

- a support service case.

Ongoing intervention includes permanency planning which aims to ensure that a child experiences continuity of care and transitions successfully into adulthood.

There are three permanency options for a child: safely reunifying the child with their family, long-term out-of-home care until the age of 18, or adoption.



4.1.3. CSSC service delivery structure

Service delivery teams within CSSCs are usually aligned with a particular work phase in the child protection system, that is, investigation and assessment or ongoing intervention.

Consequently CSOs may work in a 'pure' investigation and assessment team or in a team that deals with ongoing intervention. However, team structures vary across CSSCs particularly in relation ongoing intervention case types. The reasonable workload benchmarks currently reflect caseloads across three team types:

- Investigation and Assessment
- Ongoing intervention - Intervention with Parental Agreement (IPA)
- Ongoing intervention – Children under orders (CUO)

It is acknowledged that team structure and caseloads may vary from this model, or not be clearly reflected in this model, for example:

- Teams may carry a mix of CUO and IPA in an ongoing intervention team.
- CUO teams carry only short term or long term orders or a mix of these.
- Support service cases are unlikely to make up a caseload on their own and can be allocated to a worker on any of these teams.

Specialist staff such as senior practitioners, child safety support officers, court coordinators, SCAN coordinators and family group meeting conveners support particular phases or activities within the system.

4.1.4. Support within the broader organisation

To manage the broader system and support effective and quality service delivery, a range of work units other than CSSCs undertake roles directly with the public and external stakeholders and contribute to the achievement of core tasks identified in the child protection system. These roles include intake, placement services, managing public concerns and complaints, management of court processes, performance tracking, and grants management. These work units include:

- Placement Services Units (PSU)
- Regional Intake Services (RIS)
- Child Safety Practice Improvement (CSPI)
- Regional Services Delivery Performance Planning and Review (RSDO PPR)
- Child Safety, Families & Individual Support Programs and Partnerships
- Child Protection Development
- Statewide Services

4.2. Reasonable caseload benchmarks

4.2.1. Development

Reasonable caseload benchmarks were developed for Child Safety Services following consideration of operational performance review target ranges, performance targets identified in the recent Healthy Child Safety Service Centre Review, and research of national and international jurisdictions. Benchmarks were further developed in consultation with Together Queensland (formerly Queensland Public Sector Union) delegates and experienced CSSC managers and following preliminary trial within eight CSSCs.

The reasonable caseload benchmarks table (section 4.2.4) identifies indicative caseload benchmarks applicable to:

- intake
- investigation and assessment (I&A)
- intervention with parental agreement (IPA)
- ongoing intervention (OI).

4.2.2. Assumptions

Reasonable benchmarks have been developed taking into account a number of considerations and are based on the following assumptions:

- Workload demands are based on compliance with practice and policy requirements as at October 2011. Changes to legislation, child protection policy and/or practice requirements may impact frontline workload and will necessitate the review of the benchmarks.
- CSOs have completed orientation and phase two of CSO entry level training and/or other induction and basic training required to undertake standard duties of the role.
- Team leader span of control is usually up to six Child Safety Officers (CSOs) to one team leader.
- CSOs deliver direct client services and they are supported by a range of roles such as managers, team leaders, senior practitioners, family group meeting convenors, court coordinators, Suspected Child Abuse Network (SCAN) coordinators, child safety support officers, administration staff, regional intake staff and placement services staff.
- Support service cases represent significant workload for CSOs and the benchmarks assume their inclusion within caseloads to ensure that this work component is captured.

4.2.3. Principles

Application of reasonable caseload benchmarks is guided using the following **principles**:

- Benchmarks are indicators of workload thresholds and should be applied flexibly, that is, they are not prescriptive.
- Application of benchmarks will vary and depend on worker capability, case intensity and caseload type, therefore an allocated caseload may vary from the benchmarks.
- Benchmarks are to be used by CSOs, team leaders and managers to assist with workload discussions.
- Benchmarks are to be used in conjunction with tools and frameworks in this guide to assist CSOs, team leaders and managers in allocating work.
- Individual caseload allocations are to be considered in the context of the benchmarks when CSOs, team leaders and managers escalate workload concerns.

4.4. Predictive planning – Beyond crisis

4.4.1. Predictive planning

Predictive planning is a workload management framework based on the premise that people in any work environment can complete their work in a planned, responsive, non-reactive way.

Adopting the predictive planning philosophy requires a shift in mindset:

- from 'we are in crisis and we don't have time'
- to choosing the mindset **'we can predict what is coming up and we can plan for it'**.

Predictive planning is a previously tested and successful option for managing workload in Child Safety Service Centres.

Implementation hint # 1

Realistic Time Frames

Experience has shown that it takes time and effort to for predictive planning to gain traction in CSSCs. It is essential that CSSC leaders understand this and allow at least 6 – 12 months to establish the foundations for predictive planning in a CSSC.

4.4.2. Background and philosophy

Predictive planning evolved in the late 1990s in the Queensland statutory child protection context at a time when delivering child protection services was seen as unpredictable and crisis driven.

The foundation for predictive planning was the desire to produce greater certainty and structure for both staff and clients with the aim of changing the culture from being reactive to responsive. At the time, staff quickly embraced the philosophy of being 'responsive' but day-to-day work was planned in an ad hoc way and neither workers or clients had any firm plans about what was happening from one day to the next. In this context staff struggled to get a sense of achievement, children and families didn't know when to expect departmental contact, and work was unstructured.

The workload calendar is the key tool for addressing these issues and putting the predictive planning philosophy into practice.

The framework is underpinned by a simple concept that accepts that the vast majority of work can be planned in advance, in predictable and regular cycles.

By using existing resources like the Microsoft Outlook calendar, predictive planning can be implemented in any workgroup.

4.3. Workload allocation review

Applying reasonable caseload benchmarks in accordance with the principles outlined on page 30 requires an understanding of case intensity and worker capability:

Case intensity describes the **time** that is required to ensure that case work and case management imperatives (based on the needs of the child) are addressed. This in turn provides an indication of actual workload. Case intensity is not the same as case complexity – a relatively simple case may require a large input of time to complete case work activities and vice versa, complex cases may not always take a lot of time.

Worker capability is the **degree** to which a worker has sufficient skills and knowledge and personal capacity to undertake the work required. Worker capability varies from one worker to the next, and can vary for individuals, according to a range of factors including current case work requirements, training received and current personal circumstances. Acknowledging variations in worker capability is an essential component of successful workload management.

4.3.1. Principles underlying workload allocation

- Individuals are supported through the allocation of appropriate workload based on their current workload capacity.
- The child's best interests remain paramount when considering changes of caseworker.
- Effectively managing the work is a shared responsibility across the CSSC.
- Caseload allocation and workload management decisions should ensure equity and parity in relation to the relative skill and developmental level of individual workers.
- Functioning individuals lead to functioning teams which, in turn, supports a high performance office where both culture and strategy reflect a child focus.

4.3.2. Methodology

A. Identify workload requirements – case intensity

Identifying workload requirements can be achieved by assessing the intensity of the cases held in a CSSC. Case intensity refers to how much time is needed to carry out tasks required to service the case. Some cases that are considered simple from a child protection perspective may actually require more time input than more complex cases because of factors such as activity generated by external stakeholders, rural and remote travel requirements, and bureaucratic processes.

Determining case intensity assists in measuring workload because it identifies the likelihood that some cases will take more time than others, for example, cases in rural and remote areas where travel is a significant component of workload. In considering individual workloads it is important to view case intensity from the perspective of the time input required from the CSO.

A three tiered rating system of High, Medium and Low intensity has been developed to distinguish between the varying service requirements in a relatively simple manner. This rating system is provided below with a range of suggested indicators for each one. While Investigation and Assessment may be generally considered high intensity, it is not listed below. However, the three tiered weighting concept can be applied to this type of caseload as well, depending on the nature of the I&A (number children, interagency involvement, family dynamics, child protection history, etc).

High intensity – high current service requirements

- children under four where reunification is imminent
- IPA cases where there is limited or no external services involved
- interim child protection orders requiring Court documentation
- contested child protection applications
- QCAT matters
- behavioural transitional placements – with extreme or complex support needs
- CUO where young people has very high risk behaviours
- transition from care under seventeen years of age
- CUO where placement disruption is imminent, requiring intensive supports
- significant travel component
- CSO contact in excess of the minimum requirements of the FRE/FRRE/FRA

Medium intensity – medium current service requirements

- children aged four to 18 years of age who are being reunified
- disability transitional placements
- placement outside the catchment (can become high intensity if the distance is great)
- IPA or short term orders where services are well engaged with family
- IPAs or short term orders there is steady progress from parents in the case plan outcomes
- child in out of home care where there is placement disruption or complex/extreme needs.

Low intensity – low current service requirements

- Short term orders where there is good engagement/progress from both parents and stakeholders in the case plan outcomes
- support service cases
- sibling group together in stable placement
- long-term guardianship – chief executive with stable long-term placements
- long-term guardianship – other (with recent changes in legislation these cases may be considered as being lower than low intensity).

This rating system provides a broad guide for assessing workload, that is, generally high intensity cases require more time input than medium intensity, and low intensity cases require the least amount of time input. To give an indication of total workload for a mix of cases the following case weighting formula is suggested:

High intensity	=	Case number x 3
Medium intensity	=	Case number x 2
Low intensity	=	Case number x 1

An example of how these weightings can be applied to an Ongoing Intervention team is provided in Figure 6: Typical workload allocation matrix on page 34. To determine the true workload, consideration must be given to the nature of the cases carried by each worker and subsequently by each team.

B. Assess resource availability – worker capability and capacity

Caseload carrying staff vary in their capabilities (knowledge, skills, abilities, experience and personal attributes) and this is an important factor to take into consideration when allocating resources to deliver casework services. Capacity can be determined by assessing capability in the context of current pressures, both work and personal, as well as any learning and development needs the worker may have.

The QPS CLF articulates five key organisational capabilities, their components, and behavioural indicators corresponding to each classification level within the department. These capabilities can be used in the context of the child protection practice framework for assessing worker capability and determining areas of achievement and areas for development in individual workers. This is foundational information and should be considered with a range of factors to assess worker capacity including significant events (both personal and work) and years of experience among others.

The following provides an additional set of indicators for assessing worker capability at three levels:

Basic capability

- Commencing CSOs on restricted duties in accordance with the CSO training program
- CSOs, usually in their first year, considered to be developing the knowledge and skills required for their role.
- CSOs at all levels of experience who are dealing with additional impacts either personal and or work related.
- CSOs with significant support and supervision needs, both formally and informally.

Medium capability

- CSOs who have acquired the basic knowledge and skills and are now consolidating both.
- CSOs who are increasing in their autonomy and have a medium amount of support and supervision.

High capability

- CSOs who demonstrate confidence and ability in both knowledge and skills, have a well established child protection framework and can be given complex case work.
- CSOs at this level require support and supervision that responds appropriately to their level and the nature of their caseload. They may be able to provide support and mentoring to other workers.

C. Review case and resource allocation

In identifying case intensity and worker capability, management teams can identify workload pressure points and potential resources.

The typical workload allocation matrix below provides an example of a caseload allocation scenario for three caseload carrying workers in a CUO team in a CSSC. The matrix shows the total number of cases for each worker and then breaks these down into intensity levels with a workload weighting given to each. The matrix provides a final workload weighting for each caseload, thereby providing a standard for comparing workloads. This is one piece of information that management teams can consider in making workload allocation decisions, and should be used in the context of worker capability, reasonable workload benchmarks and other elements outlined in this guide.

Figure 6: Typical workload allocation for an Ongoing Intervention team

Worker	Worker A		Worker B		Worker C	
Total caseload →	18		24		20	
Case intensity		Weighting		Weighting		Weighting
High	4	x 3 = 12	5	x 3 = 15	3	x 3 = 9
Medium	6	x 2 = 12	8	x 2 = 16	10	x 2 = 20
Low	8	x 1 = 8	11	x 1 = 11	7	x 1 = 7
Total workload weighting →	32		42		36	

Measuring workload is slightly more complex for workers with a mixed caseload including I&As, IPAs and CUOs. While I&As and IPAs are always considered intense, they represent different workload to CUOs and therefore can't be represented with CUOs in the workload allocation table at Figure 6.

However, they can be represented as a proportion of total caseload based on the maximum number of cases indicated in the benchmarks as shown at Figure 7. This provides a foundation for caseload comparison, see Figure 8, and case intensity considerations can then be applied.

Figure 7: Proportion of caseload for various case types

Case type	Full caseload	¾ caseload	½ caseload	¼ caseload
I&A	8	6	4	2
IPA	12	9	6	3
CUO	22	16-17	11	5-6

Figure 10: Typical workload allocation for a mixed caseload

Worker	Worker A		Worker B		Worker C	
	Case #	Caseload proportion	Case #	Caseload proportion	Case #	Caseload proportion
I&A	4	.5	2	.25	0	0
IPA	3	.25	5	.5	6	.5
CUO	6	.25	12	.5	10	.5
Total workload →		1		1.25		1

4.3.3. Responding to workloads

Taken in context, this information can support decisions on reallocating resources, utilising appropriate service supports, identifying pressure points and resource gaps, and escalating workload issues.

Options may include:

- reallocating tasks associated with specific cases to other staff members
- reallocating case management to another CSO
- utilising specialist staff to assist CSO in completion
- utilising internal resources such as mentoring and a buddy system to support workers
- utilising external resources such as funded services to provide specific casework services
- considering whole of office resources to fulfil service gaps
- escalating workload management issues to the appropriate level.

4.4. Predictive planning – Beyond crisis

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By using existing resources like the Microsoft Outlook calendar, predictive planning can be implemented in any workgroup.

Implementation hint # 2

Preparing for predictive planning

While predictive planning is accepted as a valuable workload management tool, it can be a difficult concept to communicate. CSSC leaders seeking to implement predictive planning can enhance their preparation by identifying a predictive planning mentor – someone experienced with successful implementation of predictive planning in a CSSC – and negotiating training and support for key implementation staff (e.g. management team).

4.4.3. The predictive planning workload calendar – How is it different?

The difference between using a predictive planning calendar and a calendar used simply for booking appointments rests in the application of the framework. That is, understanding the work, planning for predictable work activities, and recording these activities in the calendar.

Proof of predictive planning is in the pattern of predictable, repeated cycles of activities (e.g. daily, weekly, monthly etc) recorded in the workload calendar.

Predictive planning is not filling up a calendar with appointments or using a calendar from time to time to schedule select activities.

Implementation hint # 3

Planning for predictive planning

Developing a strategy to implement predictive planning in a CSSC is an important step towards success. Management teams can achieve this by setting aside time to plan for implementation. It is important to identify CSSC strengths and priorities at the outset, including potential predictive planning 'champions' within teams.

4.4.4. Devising a predictive planning calendar

Predictive planning calendars are tailored to individual requirements but most CSSC staff members will start by including the following **non-negotiable** items in their calendar:

- fortnightly supervision,
- staff meetings
- team meetings

Calendars for Child Safety Officers will also include non-negotiables such as:

- administration time (case notes, submissions and data entry) equating to 20% or one day per week
- home visits scheduled with children and/or families weekly, fortnightly or monthly as indicated by the case plan goals
- set days for I&A workers to complete assessments
- set times for write-ups
- time for training and learning development activities.

Other effective workload management options for inclusion are:

- morning or afternoon musters – whereby teams come together for 10 minutes to catch up around day to day operational issues. Musters can promote a culture of shared performance and shared responsibility for operational issues
- twenty-four hour I&A response roster - can assist I&A workers to have greater control and predictability about their daily work.

Ensuring these activities are **scheduled at the same time** each week, fortnight or month (as applicable) will greatly increase the effectiveness of the calendar.

Implementation hint # 4

Where to start?

One way to get started in a team or a CSSC is to develop a calendar for a single worker. Identify an individual who is keen to get started and set aside some time (several hours) to identify non-negotiable activities specific to their caseload, and enter these into the electronic calendar. Early users can become mentors for other staff members as teams work through the implementation process.

4.4.5. Predictive planning calendars for team leaders, managers and specialist staff

Predictive planning has proven to be most successful when it is actively promoted and used by management teams in conjunction with CSOs.

The full benefits of predictive planning are realised when there is synchronicity between the calendars of all workers in a CSSC, but particularly between CSOs, team leaders and managers.

In practice, this means that team leaders and managers must mirror and commit to those same times set aside by CSOs for activities like supervision, team meetings and staff meetings.

At an operational level it is also essential that team leaders using predictive planning work with their teams to set aside agreed times for casework activities such as reviews, Family Group Meetings (FGMs), and learning development requirements such as CSO Entry Level Training. These can be 'blocked out' well in advance so all staff have a sense of each other's availability when setting review dates for the future. Specialist workers such as FGM convenors, senior practitioners and court officers can assist with and also benefit from this level of planning.

4.4.6. Creating patterns in workload

Once the 'non-negotiable' items are scheduled, workers can build on their schedules by making set times for other routine activities. These activities are best considered in the context of tasks that need to be completed on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. For example, checking emails and 'my tasks' in ICMS would be a desirable daily activity, whereas compiling paperwork for filing might be a weekly task.

While the predictive planning is a highly structured approach, it is important to allow for future events and flexibility in the calendar. The idea that the calendars must be full of activities is a common

misunderstanding. In fact, for the calendars to work well, and to allow some flexibility when activities are unavoidably cancelled, there must be free space.

Figure 9 on page 42 is an example of a CSO calendar for a four week period and shows a pattern of work relating to a number of client children, some with regular contact to coordinate, some with only one contact during the period, and some currently subject to planning and review. The CSO may have other cases for which a contact hasn't been planned. The calendar includes regular time for supervision, team meetings, paperwork and other imperatives, as well as allowing free time to ensure flexibility to meet emerging case work needs.

4.4.7. Monitoring

It is essential that, once established, predictive planning is monitored on an ongoing basis.

When the complexities of child protection practice become overwhelming for staff, plans are often set aside. However, it is during these times that adhering to a structured plan is one of the most effective ways for navigating through the sense of crisis, for both staff and clients.

Additionally, over years of predictive planning implementation in CSSCs, it has become evident that staff who feel that predictive planning is not working are those who have lost the pattern of predictability in their calendars, that is, their calendars have reverted to ad hoc scheduling. This can occur for a variety of reasons including changes in worker capacity, loss of calendar synchronicity across the CSSC, and client related 'crisis' events.

Monitoring the application of predictive planning within a team and across CSSCs, will assist to identify issues, re-establish workload calendars and support effective workload management.

Implementation hint # 5

Avenues for monitoring predictive planning

Predictive planning within a CSSC can be monitored through regular review opportunities and processes including:

- Supervision
- Team meetings
- Staff meetings
- CSSC Environmental Scan

Key elements for consideration include individual, team and office functioning, workload data, organisational changes (staff, systems), client dynamics.

Case study – predictive planning in action

As a result of implementing predictive planning, staff of one Queensland CSSC reported a change in the office culture from chaos to calm, with increased staff satisfaction and productivity.

In this case study staff share their experience and provide important insight into what is required for successful predictive planning implementation.

Management

Management commitment to and understanding of the concept that child protection work could be predicted and planned was an essential component of the implementation. To consolidate their commitment and understanding the management team negotiated to receive mentoring support and training from an experienced predictive planning practitioner from within the department.

The first step taken by the management team was to start using the electronic calendar in Microsoft Outlook for all planning and appointments. Calendars were shared so that all team members could access them to make appointments for themselves and with others.

While the management team were committed to the process it was not always easy. At times, predictive planning was seen as another set of obligations adding to a sense of being overwhelmed. Arising complex and unexpected case matters made it difficult to take on board the new system.

However, with perseverance, the benefits became evident and using the calendars became habitual for management team members.

Staff

With the management team having accepted the use of electronic calendars, the rest of the staff were asked to use them to plan all of the 'givens' in the office such as team meetings, staff meetings, supervision and monthly home visits. Once again, calendars were shared so that everyone in the office could access everyone else's calendars.

Staff reported that the first three months were the most difficult with some rejecting the system and saying it was a waste of time. However, they persisted and six months after implementation, using the calendar as a foundational predictive planning tool had become a habit with most staff.

A key learning for the management team was the importance of recognising that different workers can be at different stages of readiness for using a predictive planning calendar. Overall it took a year for staff to transition from resistance to acceptance of the tool. Some staff worked with two systems (paper and electronic) before they felt comfortable leaving the paper system behind. Interestingly, there was no transition time for new staff – they came into office and were introduced to the framework and the electronic calendar as givens.

Ongoing implementation

The focus for ongoing implementation was entering flags for case plan reviews and child health passport (CHP) renewals into the electronic calendars with home visits being planned prior to these milestones. By inputting flags into the electronic calendar, CSOs are reminded to use home visits to gather required information for case plan reviews and CHP renewals.

This stage of implementation was completed one worker's caseload at a time commencing with a CSO who was very comfortable with technology and the calendar. The CSO and team leader took a

couple of hours to identify significant due dates for each of his twenty-seven cases, including case plan and court expiry dates (three months out), and to input flags in the calendar.

The CSOs and Team Leaders found that inputting flags and estimating the time taken to complete elements of case work relied on reasonable estimates of the time required to complete tasks, which in turn is a trial and error process. At first staff underestimated the time it took to do documents (strategic decision making tools, case plans, placement agreements etc). However, after implementing the use of calendar planning with one CSO, staff members progressed with supporting the next CSO to do so, and so on, learning and adjusting on the way.

Benefits

While CSSC staff admit the implementation process has not been straightforward and has not been easy, they have identified clear benefits that have made it worthwhile. These are:

- workers are more focused and have a **sense of control** over their work
- clients receive more **consistent service**, for example, workers rarely need to cancel planned home visits
- using shared electronic calendars **saves time** when organising meetings, **promotes understanding** of pressures among staff, and supports **workplace health and safety** measures
- productivity has increased – planning workload assists with proactive performance management and sets the expectation for **achievable and high quality service delivery**.

Keys to success

With their experience of implementation the staff from this CSSC offer the following advice to other CSSCs looking at implementing predictive planning to support their workload management:

- Implementation needs to be driven by the **management team**.
- Understanding and **accepting the philosophy** needs to **precede** implementation.
- It will take time to overcome resistance and to develop **good habits** around using the tool.
- When work pressures increase, **re-organise and re-commit** to predictive planning.
- Take account of **staff readiness** – identify who is ready, what are staff development needs, and who can support others with skills such as working with Microsoft Outlook.
- Case intensity and worker capability **variables** need to be considered when planning work.
- Where possible ensure meetings **times are adhered to**.
- **Modelling by management team** will support staff acceptance of the framework.
- **Supervision** must be given **priority** over other workload.
- **Calendar printouts** can be used for supervision to discuss workload and highlight capacity issues.
- Implementing predictive planning **takes time**.

Figure 9: Example CSO calendar over four weeks *

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p>9am Team Muster</p> <p>10am Kay Smith Strength and Needs Analysis</p> <p>11am Kay Smith Review Report</p> <p>1pm Lunch</p> <p>3.30pm Sally Jones Home visit</p>	<p>10am Kay Smith Affidavit</p> <p>1pm Lunch</p> <p>2pm Harry Bell Contact visit</p>	<p>9am Team/Staff Mtg</p> <p>9am Tinker draft affidavit due!</p> <p>10am Practice development</p> <p>1pm Lunch</p> <p>1.30pm Paperwork/Casenotes</p>	<p>8am Mark York Prison visit</p> <p>9.30am Supervisor</p> <p>1pm Lunch</p> <p>1.30pm Paperwork/Casenotes</p>	<p>9am Team Muster</p> <p>10am Kay Smith Family Group Meeting (Tentative)</p> <p>1pm Lunch</p> <p>1.30pm Paperwork/Casenotes</p> <p>3pm Ron Holt Transport</p> <p>3.30pm Peggy Green Contact visit</p> <p>3.30pm Kylie Day home visit</p>
<p>9am Team Muster</p> <p>9.30am Kay Smith Affidavit</p> <p>1pm Lunch</p> <p>3.30pm Kylie Day home visit</p>	<p>1pm Lunch</p> <p>2pm Harry Bell Contact visit</p> <p>3pm Jack and Jill White Contact visit</p>	<p>9am Team/Staff Mtg</p> <p>9am Kay Smith draft affidavit due!</p> <p>1pm Lunch</p> <p>1.30pm Paperwork/Casenotes</p>	<p>9.30am Court related work</p> <p>1pm Lunch</p> <p>1.30pm Paperwork/Casenotes</p> <p>4pm Poppy Hill Home visit</p>	<p>9am Team Muster</p> <p>1pm Lunch</p> <p>1.30pm Paperwork/Casenotes</p> <p>3.30pm Tom Shue Home visit</p>
<p>9am Team Muster</p> <p>10am Dora and Hannah Tinker Case Review</p> <p>11.30 am Tinker Write up case plan</p> <p>1pm Lunch</p> <p>3.30pm Dora Tinker Home visit</p>	<p>9.30am Ethna Wood/Josh Stone Home visit</p> <p>1pm Lunch</p> <p>2pm Harry Bell Contact visit</p> <p>3.30pm Peggy Green Home visit</p>	<p>9am Team/Staff Mtg</p> <p>1pm Lunch</p> <p>1.30pm Paperwork/Casenotes</p>	<p>9.30am Supervision</p> <p>11am Poppy Hill Strength and Needs Analysis</p> <p>12.30 Lunch</p> <p>1pm Hannah Tinker Home visit</p> <p>2pm Tim and Jim Tinker Case discussion</p>	<p>9am Team Muster</p> <p>11.30am Poppy Hill Case Review</p> <p>1pm Lunch</p> <p>1.30pm Poppy Hill Write up case plan</p> <p>3pm Ron Holt Transport</p> <p>3.30pm Peggy Green contact visit</p> <p>3.30pm Kylie Day contact visit</p>
<p>9am Team Muster</p> <p>1pm Lunch</p> <p>3.30pm Sally Jones Home visit</p>	<p>1pm Lunch</p> <p>2pm Harry Bell Contact visit</p>	<p>9am Team/Staff Mtg</p> <p>11.30am compulsory Child Health Passport Day</p> <p>1pm Lunch</p> <p>2pm Tinker Family Group Meeting</p>	<p>9.30am Court related work</p> <p>1pm Lunch</p> <p>1.30pm Paperwork/Casenotes</p> <p>3pm Jack and Jill White Contact visit</p>	<p>9am Team Muster</p> <p>1pm Lunch</p> <p>1.30pm Paperwork/Casenotes</p>

* Calendar adapted from an actual CSO Microsoft Outlook calendar. Names have been changed to protect clients' identities and any similarity to actual client names that may occur is coincidental.

4.5 Ongoing Review

The frontline work undertaken by CSSCs is influenced by a number of factors and requires regular review to ensure that allocated resources are identified and placed to most effectively meet service delivery requirements. Changes in client population, changing demographics as well as organisational changes in policy and practice, can all influence workload.

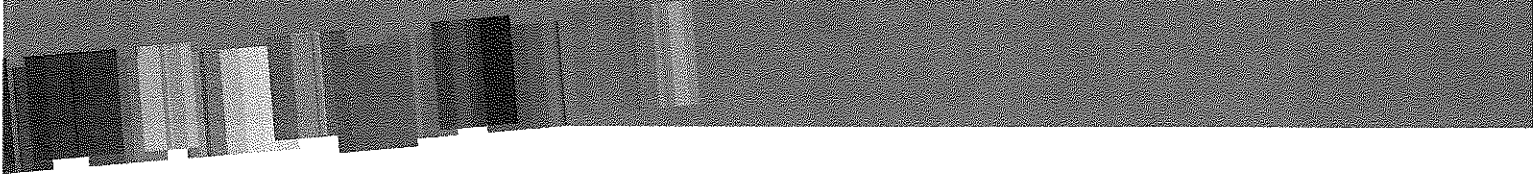
Reviewing the CSSC model of service delivery on a regular basis provides the foundation for mobilising resources to align with work pressures and needs. It assists the management team of the CSSC to look for local solutions to identified workload issues, prior to engaging in an escalation process.

The concept, tools and frameworks represented in the Guide are at the core of reviewing service delivery in CSSCs and link back to the workload management flowchart i.e.:

- Understand the operational environment
- Deliver services
- Ongoing review
- Escalation

Service centre managers should ensure that a regular review cycle is incorporated into the management of the CSSC, for example, a formal review to be held by the management team every six months. This review could be timed to contribute to the operational performance review process for the region.

Information to be considered in the review process can be elicited in the process of applying the environmental scan, the workload allocation review model and predictive planning. These tools in turn draw from conversations that occur both formally and informally day to day, week to week in Child Safety Service Centres.



Section 5. Escalating Workload Issues

5.1 Escalating workload management issues in Child Safety Services

The department acknowledges that workload management is a whole of organisation responsibility and that risks associated with workload pressures do not sit with individual CSOs. By articulating the importance of escalating workload issues, and providing an escalation framework, the department seeks to equip Child Safety staff to communicate effectively around workload issues and to identify a range of appropriate responses to these issues, as well as ensure appropriate risk management.

5.1.1. Principles underpinning escalation of workload issues:

- **Ongoing Process** - Workload management is an ongoing process that relies on a constant flow of information between staff and management.
- **Communication** - Managers, team leaders, child safety officers and other staff communicate regularly regarding workload management and associated issues.
- **Support** - Workload management discussions provide an opportunity to check staff support requirements.
- **Response** - Ensuring workload management issues are responded to in a timely manner contributes to supporting staff and meeting service delivery demands.
- **Case Allocation** - Case allocation should be equitable, taking into account both worker capability and case intensity.
- **Benchmarks** - Cases over the reasonable benchmarks may be allocated however this should depend upon the outcome of analysis of case intensity and worker capability, using the tools and information contained in this guide, and in consultation with the CSO.
- **Unallocated cases** - Decisions to maintain a case as unallocated or to escalate responsibility for an unallocated case should be based on the current intensity and needs of the case. If a decision is made not to allocate a case because of workload issues, the risk associated with this sits at the CSSC manager level and the reasons for non allocation are communicated to the regional level.
- **Formal escalation** - Where agreement around workload issues cannot be reached between relevant parties, or if a region cannot address issues within regional resources, formal escalation of issues is required.

5.1.2. Day to day process for escalating workload issues

As indicated in the principles above, workload is a regular discussion item for all Child Safety service delivery staff. It is not necessarily a linear discussion from CSOs to Team Leader to Manager, but occurs across levels and through various formal (supervision) and informal (general discussion) avenues (see Figure 10: Escalation flow chart, page 49)

When issues are raised, there is an expectation that staff will receive a supportive and timely response from their colleagues and supervisors. At the most basic level this requires a commitment to listen to the issues and develop an initial response to the situation, such as agreeing to get back to them within a specific timeframe. Development of an appropriate response

depends on a range of factors including nature of the issue (case intensity or worker capacity) and the availability of resources.

The steps below provide a process and timeframes for responding to workload issues. Issues can be escalated sooner than the timeframes indicated where there is agreement between the relevant parties that the issue can not be resolved at the current level.

Step 1: CSOs and team leaders (two weeks)

- CSOs and team leaders regularly discuss workload during supervision sessions.
- If an issue is raised it is noted in supervision and the team leader considers various approaches to resolving the issue such as reallocation within the team or negotiation around priorities and timelines. The team leader also considers the nature of the problem, is it temporary (e.g. a staff member on leave) or is it likely to be a longer term issue.
- The CSO and team leader attempt to resolve the issue within two weeks, within the resources available to them.
- If the issue cannot be resolved satisfactorily between the team leader and CSO, the team leader reports the issue to the manager.
- Satisfactory resolution of the issue requires agreement by both the team leader and the CSO that the issue is resolved or being dealt with appropriately.

Step 2. Service centre managers (one month)

- As outlined above, a workload issue that cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of both the team leader and the CSO within two weeks is escalated to the manager for review and action.
- Managers are responsible for reviewing the nature of the issue and whole of office resources and priorities in considering how to address the issue.
- Managers make all possible attempts to resolve the issue within one month of initial escalation to the manager, including discussion of the issue at regional leadership forums.
- If issues cannot be resolved in a timely manner within current CSSC resources, details are provided to the Regional Director.

Step 3. Regional Management Team* (two – three weeks)

**The officer with primary responsibility for the escalation of workload issues within a region may be the assistant regional director (ARD) or regional director (RD) depending on the particular region*

- The ARD/RD works in consultation with the CSSC manager to consider the foundation of the problem, that is, is it local, regional or organisational.
- The ARD/RD is responsible for reviewing the nature of the issue and whole of region resources and priorities in considering how to address the issue.
- The ARD/RD works with the Service Area Leadership Team (SALT) to develop strategies to address workload issues.
- The ARD/RD also consults, where appropriate, with specialist departmental units when considering options for addressing workload issues.
- If workload issues cannot be resolved (or an agreed plan developed) within current regional resources, in a two week period, the ARD/RD advises the RED, who considers the issue for a further week.
- Where the RED can not successfully resolve the workload issues using the resources and options available to the region, the RED will formally escalate the issue to the Associate Director-General, Regional Services Delivery Operations.

5.1.3. Formal escalation of workload issues

While escalation of workload management issues is a **day to day** process that is best managed according to a clear process and timeframes (as outlined in section 5.1.2), **formal** escalation of workload management issues is an option under the following circumstances:

- where agreement around workload issues cannot be reached between relevant parties
- where a region cannot successfully resolve workload issues using the resources and options available to the region.

Providing a formal escalation process acknowledges that not all workload management discussions between relevant parties will result in agreement and that, at times, it is appropriate to offer a more formal framework to assist in resolving issues.

Formal escalation of a workload management issue requires that the issue is put in writing to the appropriate party (see below).

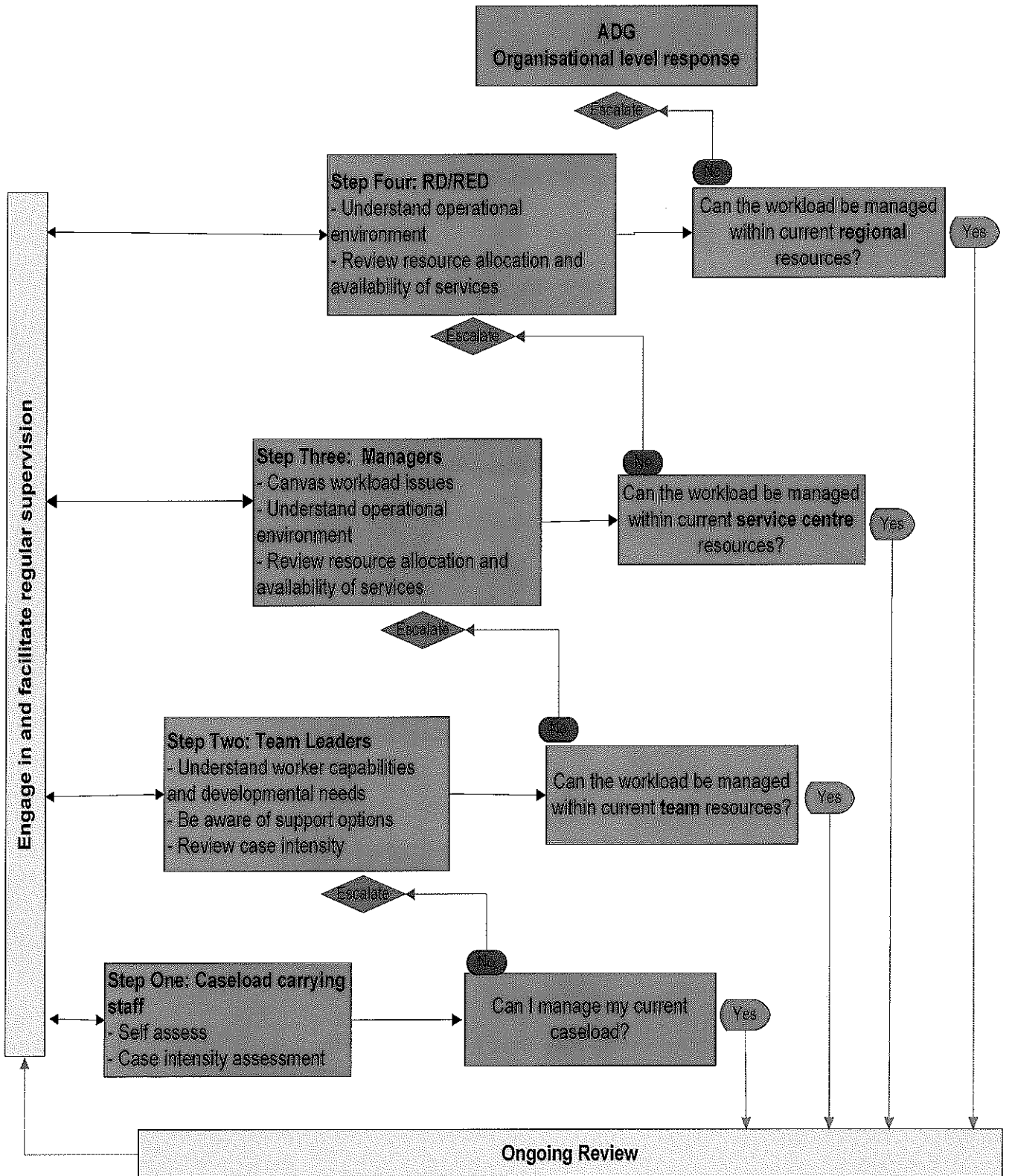
Formal escalation where agreement cannot be reached

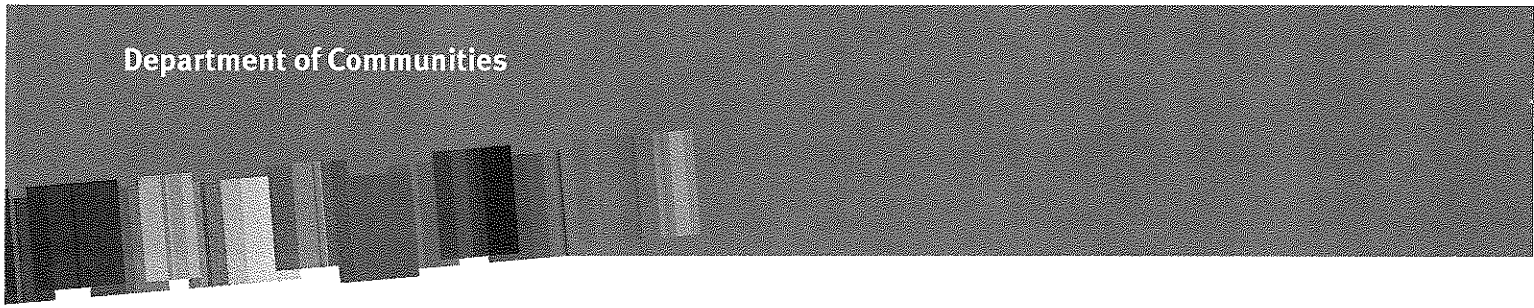
- The parties most relevant to a formal escalation of workload issues where agreement cannot be reached are CSOs, team leaders and CSSC managers.
- A party may formally report a workload management issue to a more senior officer if agreement cannot be reached between them and their immediate supervisor about an appropriate response to a workload management issue.
- Disagreement regarding responses to issues may be around timeliness or level of response.
- Formal escalation of workload issues should be **in writing** and should outline the nature of discussions so far, the points of disagreement, and suggested outcomes sought.
- The manager is responsible for reporting any formal escalation issue to the ARD/RD at the time the issue is formally escalated by a party.
- The manager or the ARD/RD (as appropriate) is responsible for appointing an objective mediator to review the situation and provide a recommendation.
- Workload management issues that have been raised formally should be responded to with expedience in order to mitigate potential conflict and to provide appropriate support to all parties involved.

Formal escalation to the Associate Director-General (one month)

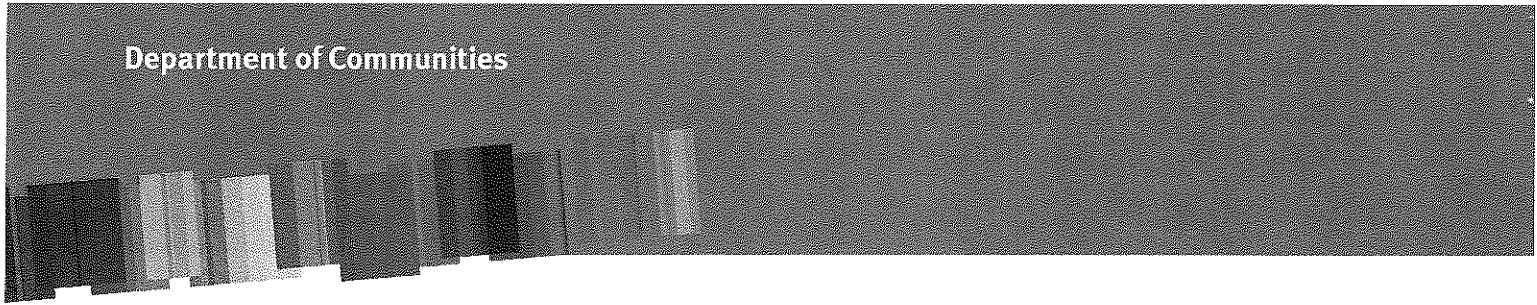
- When a workload issue has been escalated through steps 1 to 3 of the day to day escalation process outlined in section 5.1.2., and cannot be resolved, the issue will be formally escalated to the Associate Director-General (AD-G), Regional Service Delivery Operations.
- A brief will be provided to the AD-G to outline the progression of the workload issue, attempts made to resolve the matter, and where possible, specific recommendations for extra resources.
- The AD-G will attempt to address the issue through utilising a whole of organisation approach and/or through the re-evaluation of resources to the region.
- Once an outcome is determined by the AD-G it will be reported back to the region, including directly back to the parties involved
- The timeframe for response should acknowledge the amount of time already spent at the CSSC and regional levels attempting to address the issue and should therefore be as expedient as possible. It is suggested that the A-DG will provide an initial response within one month of receiving the brief.

Figure 10. Escalation flowchart





Attachments



Attachment 1: Definitions

- **Benchmark** – A standard against which the number of cases allocated to an individual staff member can be measured.
- **Capability** – Refers to the knowledge, skills, abilities and personal attributes required to work effectively in a role.
- **Capacity** – Capacity is related to capability but refers to the volume of work that can reasonably be expected and/or achieved.
- **Case intensity** – The time required to ensure that case work and case management imperatives (based on the needs of the child) are addressed. This provides an indication of actual workload.
- **Caseload** – Refers to the number of cases allocated to caseload carrying staff.
- **Caseload carrying staff** – Refers to any staff member who is allocated a case for casework and/or case management purposes.
- **Case management** – Refers to the overall responsibilities of the department when intervening in the life of a child and family. Case management is a way of working with children, families and other agencies to ensure that the services provided are coordinated, integrated and targeted to meet the needs and goals of children and their families.
- **Casework** – The set of activities that seek to address a presented need or issue for an individual or group of people e.g. for a child and/or their family.
- **Frontline staff** – Those staff providing direct services to clients.
- **Reasonable** – Agreement to an acceptable level.
- **Support Service Case (SSC)** - A SSC is one type of ongoing intervention and can only be opened in limited circumstances.
- **Workload** – The amount of work that is expected to be completed in a specified time.

For a comprehensive glossary of terms related to the work of Child Safety Services please see [Glossary of terms \(Child Safety Practice Manual\)](#).

Attachment 2: Workload benchmarks – research summary

Research into workload management strategies (particularly the use of workload benchmarks) in child protection service delivery, involving statutory child protection agencies both within Australia and overseas, highlighted workload management as a key issue for many jurisdictions. Workload management responses ranged from comprehensive analysis of the workloads involved in thousands of cases, to industrial action resulting in the mandating of caseload numbers.

Despite the varying approaches and outcomes for different jurisdictions, the research identified key factors for consideration in developing workload benchmarks. These are as follows:

- calculating workloads is an inexact science and a range of variables need to be considered
- there are variations across jurisdictions in the way child protection services are delivered and this needs to be considered when comparing benchmarks and jurisdictional workload management strategies
- case intensity influences the amount of work involved in casework and case management service delivery
- worker capability influences how much work can be allocated
- appropriate workloads facilitate health and wellbeing of workers, and job satisfaction and retention, which in turn facilitates improved outcomes for children.

Benchmarks indicators from across the jurisdictions studied have been consolidated in the table below to provide a broad indication of benchmarks in child protection service delivery:

Business Phase	Recommended range across jurisdictions	Comments
Intake	69 - 116	Screens per month
Investigation and assessment	10 - 15	At any given time
Intensive family support	2 – 8	Depends on case intensity
Child protection order	5 - 24	Ranging from high needs cases to permanent placements
Supervisor to worker ratio	4 – 8:1	Predominately 5:1

The available research demonstrates a common thread across child protection jurisdictions that historically child protection work has been under resourced and the complexity of this work has significant workload management challenges. Many jurisdictions have developed workload management responses to improve staff retention and outcomes for children. The research indicates that child protection service provision and how this work is managed is a point of much consideration cross jurisdictionally and internationally. It appears that as child protection resourcing improves, child protection agencies will need to develop more comprehensive ways of managing resources to retain staff and facilitate best practice.

Attachment 3: Bibliography

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