

The Office For Children Putting Children at the Centre



Michael White
Director, State-wide Outcomes for Children

Outline

- Office for Children – what's it about?
- Points of connection
- Future opportunities

Having an impact...



"My question is: Are we making an impact?"

Office for Children – what's it about?


The most significant Victorian reform agenda for vulnerable children in the last 20 years

- Strong and visionary leadership
- More coordinated services with better links and transitions
- Greater local flexibility
- Improved early years services

The vision

That Victoria's children and young people get the best possible start in life and that parents and communities get the help they need to achieve this.

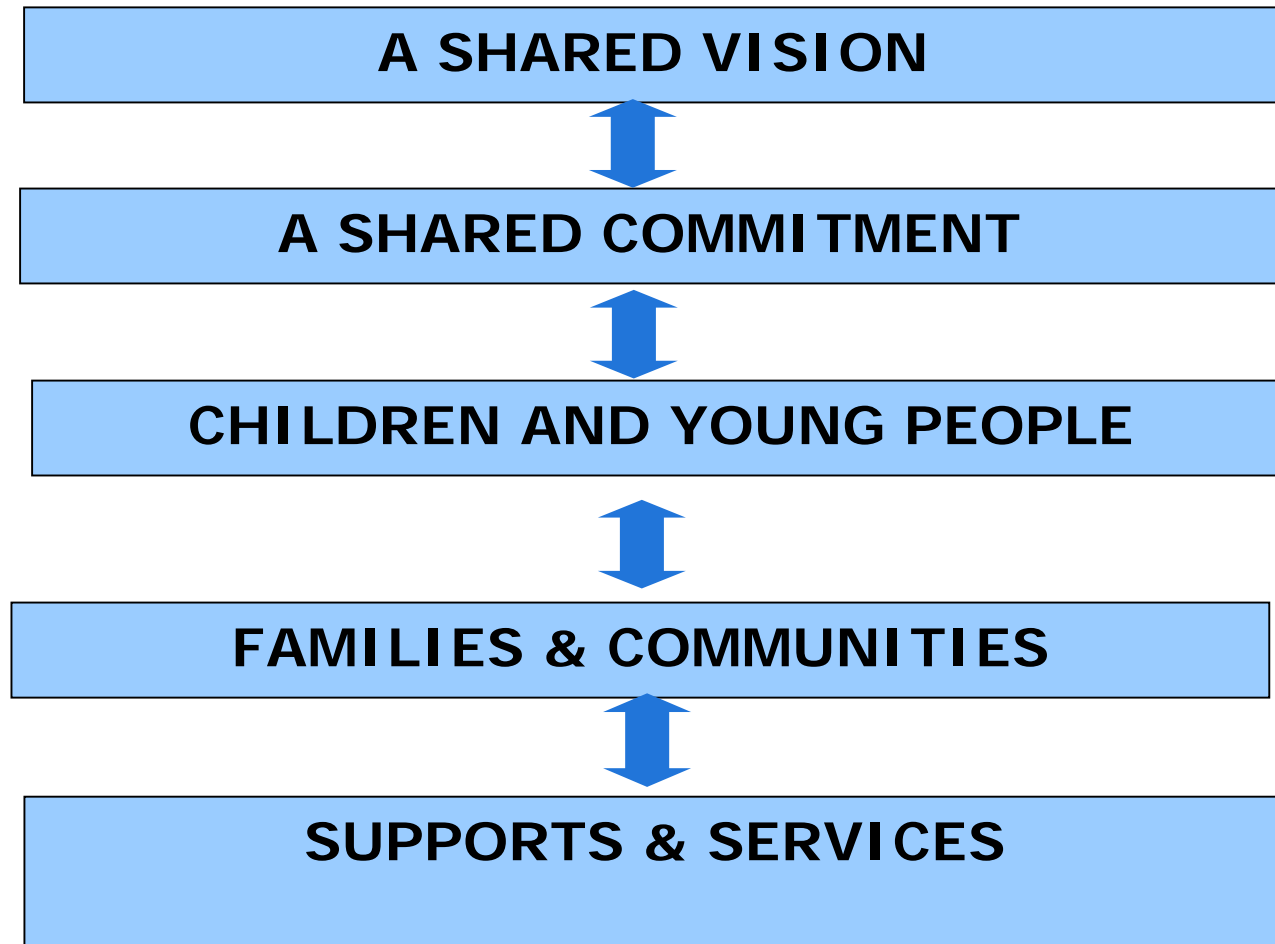
A focus on outcomes

- Service types:
 - Sick children
 - Criminal children
 - Abused children
 - Little children
 - Disabled children
 - Those we happen to know about
- 
- Positive outcomes:
 - Safety
 - Health
 - Development
 - Learning
 - Wellbeing
 - All children, everywhere

Better structures

- Office for children
- Minister for Children
- Child Safety Commissioner
- Victorian Children's Council
- Children's Services Coordination Board
- Senior Officers Group

An Integrated Policy on Children



An Integrated Policy on Children

A Vision for Victoria's Children

Every child thrives, learns and grows,
respected and valued,
to become an effective adult.



A SHARED COMMITMENT

Children and young people are provided with the best possible start in life and families and communities are given the help they need to achieve this

An Integrated Policy on Children

A Vision for Victoria's Children

Every child thrives, learns and grows,
respected and valued,
to become an effective adult.



A SHARED COMMITMENT

Children and young people are provided with the best possible start in life and families and communities are given the help they need to achieve this

An Integrated Policy on Children

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

The safety, learning, health, development and wellbeing of children and young people is protected and promoted throughout childhood.

FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES

Families are enabled to provide effective care in the child's best interests.

Strong communities value children and young people, respect diversity, value culture and build resilience and connectedness of children, young people and families

SUPPORTS & SERVICES

Victoria has the right mix of quality services, which are integrated and meet the changing needs of children, young people and families, to promote positive outcomes, intervene early and prevent harm.

Common Monitoring System

- Based on Outcomes of health, safety, development and learning, and well being.
- All children 0-18
- Independent of Programs
- Priority Groups
- Annual Report to Children's Services Co-ordination Board

Challenges

- By passing boundaries
- Multiple Levels of government
- Quality of information

- Changing needs of families and children
- High needs populations

New legislation and practice

- Establishing a coordinated service system - families receive the mix of services they need in a coordinated way
- Strengthening secondary services
- Tackling the barriers to effective earlier intervention
- Strengthening the cultural responsiveness of services

Points of connection

- 18% of children in home based care had a diagnosed mental health issue (Audit of HBC, DHS, 2001 – n=600)
- 37.5% of children in resi care (Audit of resi care, DHS, 2001, n=387)
- Stargate project - nearly one third of children entering home based care for the first time were referred for ongoing mental health treatment (Stargate final report, May 2005, n=130)

Points of connection - Take Two

- Responding to trauma and attachment disorders
- A positive model which is developing:
 - A child centred approach
 - A range of methods of engagement
 - Partnership working
 - Local service planning networks
 - Strong research focus on what works

Future opportunities

- Earlier intervention programs - CAST
- Stronger regional structures - Take Two
- Senior officer's group

The next steps

- Victoria is well positioned
- We have a lot in place
- This provides us with basis to meet new challenges
- And respond better to the needs of children

