



Sure Start Action Plan 2024

Delivering on the Tasmanian Government's commitment to provide priority access to government services and supports for children and young people in care.



Acknowledgement of Aboriginal People and Country

The Department for Education, Children and Young People acknowledges palawa/pakani (Tasmanian Aboriginal) people as the traditional and original owners of lutruwita/Tasmania.

Tasmanian Aboriginal People have cared for Country through their strong connections, maintaining their cultural identity and emotional wellbeing.

We pay our deepest respects to Elders past and present and acknowledge Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the continuing custodians of their rich cultural heritage.

We acknowledge the determination and resilience of Tasmanian Aboriginal people, who have survived invasion, dispossession, entrenched disadvantage, exclusion, intergenerational harm and trauma while continuing to sustain their identity, culture and rights.

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Introduction

The Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) is committed to ensuring that children and young people in out of home care are given the best opportunity to overcome challenges and achieve their goals. This commitment is underpinned by the six wellbeing domains set out in the whole-of-government *Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework (2017)*. These domains provide a holistic view of child and youth wellbeing and ensure we place the child at the centre of everything we do.

Evidence indicates that children and young people in out of home care often have poorer educational outcomes in comparison to those in the general population (Sebba, 2020 in Roche et al, 2023). This experience can have a negative cumulative impact upon a child's wellbeing and development over time (AIHW, 2019 in Roche et al, 2023).

With the introduction of the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy: It Takes a Tasmanian Village (2021)*, the government established its vision for all Tasmania's children and young people to thrive and grow in supportive communities. The Sure Start initiative is included as a key action within this whole-of-government strategy, building on the work of *Strong Families Safe Kids: Next Steps Action Plan (2021-2023)*. These key initiatives reflect the Tasmanian Government's ongoing commitment to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in care.

We know that investing in the wellbeing needs of children and young people in care is a collective responsibility. In 2021, the Tasmanian Government committed \$2 million over four years under the Sure Start initiative to improve wellbeing and learning outcomes for children and young people in care by providing priority access to government services. This includes access to a Learning Wellbeing Fund and improved co-ordination across government agencies.

In 2023, the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings identified the need for all agencies to work together to protect children and young people in care. Care Teams and Care Planning formed several recommendations to support quality care for some of our most vulnerable children and young people.

The Sure Start Action Plan includes implementation of a whole-of-agency DECYP approach to Care Teams that is underpinned by the six wellbeing domains, ensuring we collaborate with, hear from and respond to children and young people in care. In addition, the implementation of shared escalation protocols across government will enable greater accountability as we work together with other agencies to create a holistic system of support.

The Sure Start Action Plan outlines how we will continue to deliver on the Tasmanian Government's commitments and ensure that children and young people in care are known, safe, well and learning.

The Six Domains of Child and Youth Wellbeing

Supporting every child to thrive and reach their potential

The Tasmanian Government understands and promotes a holistic approach to child and youth wellbeing in alignment with the six wellbeing domains identified by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY, 2021).

Collectively, these six domains acknowledge the many interconnected elements that contribute to the wellbeing of children and young people across all areas of their life. The wellbeing domains are foundational to the whole-of-government *Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework* (2017), *Tasmania's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy: It takes a Tasmanian Village* (2021) and the department's own *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* (2022).

Building on these initiatives, this Sure Start Action Plan outlines five key actions for resourcing and supporting the wellbeing needs of vulnerable children and young people in care so that they may thrive and reach their potential.



Being loved, safe and valued



Having material basics



Being healthy



Learning



Participating



Having a positive sense of culture and identity



Our Commitment

The Sure Start Action Plan is delivering on the Tasmanian Government's commitment to improve learning and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people in care.



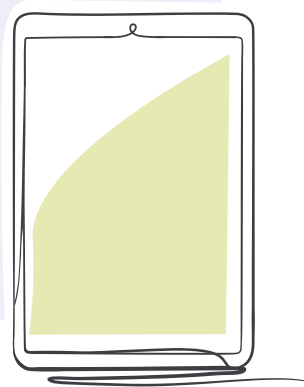
To achieve our commitment, we will:

- 1 Provide children and young people in out of home care with more opportunities to succeed through the Learning Wellbeing Fund.
- 2 Establish an interagency forum and shared escalation model that works across government to reduce barriers to services for children and young people in out of home care.
- 3 Expand the scope of the review of the *Children, Young People and Their Families Act 1997 (Tas)* to enable prioritisation of government services for children and young people in out of home care.
- 4 Implement a whole-of-agency (DECYP) approach to Care Teams that is underpinned by the six wellbeing domains.
- 5 Implement a Service Level Agreement with Homes Tasmania that prioritises the housing needs of children and young people in out of home care.

Data Snapshot

Sure Start achievements delivered for children and young people in out of home care:

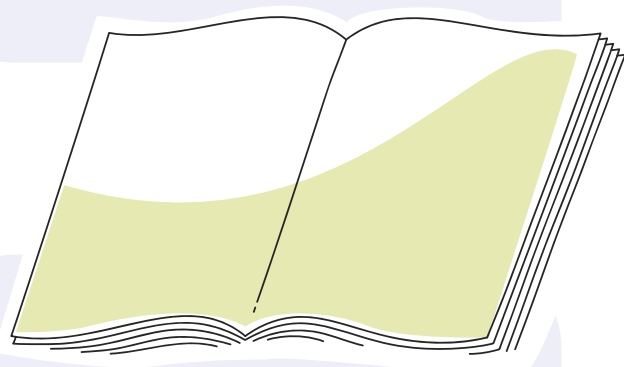
Over 400 devices have been provided for eligible students in High Schools.



5 UTAS Scholarships have been provided for eligible students entering University.

In 2024, an additional 2 UTAS Scholarships will be provided for eligible students entering University.

Approximately 230 eligible students in Primary School have received one hour of 1:1 tutoring time per week.



In 2024, approximately 225 eligible students will receive one hour of 1:1 tutoring time per week.



UNIVERSITY of
TASMANIA



ACTION

1

Provide children and young people in out of home care with more opportunities to succeed through the Learner Wellbeing Fund.

Being able to read is foundational to everything we do – learning, working, functioning in society. The Department’s Reading Priority recognises that every young Tasmanian should have the reading skills they need for life when they leave our school system.

The Sure Start initiative supports a \$2 million commitment over four years for a Learner Wellbeing Fund to ensure children and young people in care have access to the resource and services they need to achieve better education and wellbeing outcomes.

In alignment with the Department’s *Digital Inclusion for 21st Century Learners: Connected and Engaged* (2022), the Sure Start Learner Wellbeing Fund supports the department’s goal for all learners to have safe and equitable access to technology that will enable them to pursue life opportunities in the 21st century.

What we will do

The Learner Wellbeing Fund was established to meet the needs of children and young people in out of home care across four key areas:

- A primary school learning fund that provides one hour of tutoring time per week to support literacy outcomes.
- A high school learning fund that provides laptops to support online learning and access to online services.
- A college learning fund that provides driver training to support young people in out of home care to achieve their driver licence.

- A university scholarship fund providing up to \$15,000 over three years to encourage young people who have experienced out of home care to pursue or continue their higher education and career goals.

We will strengthen implementation of the Learner Wellbeing Fund by:

- Extending the Literacy Support Fund in 2024 to provide one hour of tutoring time per week to all Year 1 students in out of home care and eligible students in Years 7 – 10.
- Rolling out the Driving Support Fund in 2024 – 2025.
- Delivering a Vocational Fund that will support young people to pursue vocational training and achieve their employment goals as they transition to independence.

What this means for children and young people

- Improved literacy outcomes and enriched learning experiences.
- Stronger engagement in learning to pursue current and future goals.
- Increased access to training and employment opportunities.

ACTION

2

Establish an interagency forum and shared escalation model that works across government to reduce barriers to services for children and young people in out of home care.

The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy: It Takes a Tasmanian Village (2021) identifies enhanced cross-sectoral and cross-agency collaboration and integration as a key priority to bring about positive change for vulnerable children and young people (p.34).

The Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings (2023) also highlighted information sharing as a critical aspect for keeping children and young people safe and well.

Establishing clear governance and shared escalation protocols across government agencies will improve coordination across government services and create a system of support that enables better outcomes for children and young people in care. This model will also allow the Tasmanian Government to address the needs of all children and young people who require intensive support from time to time.

What we will do

We will implement a 12-month pilot of the Interagency Care Team Governance Model during 2024 to improve coordination across relevant government agencies. The Model will include:

- a shared interagency escalation process for complex case referrals.

- establishment of an Interagency Directors' Care Team and a Secretaries' Board Care Team Subcommittee who will review individual complex case referrals from represented agencies across government for consideration of resourcing and resolution.

Represented agencies will include:

- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Department for Education, Children and Young People
- Department of Justice
- Department of Health
- Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management
- Homes Tasmania

What this means for children and young people

- Priority access to critical government services for Tasmania's most vulnerable children and young people.
- Coordinated service responses, based on the holistic needs of the child or young person.



ACTION

3

Expand the scope of the review of the *Children, Young People and Their Families Act 1997 (Tas)* to enable prioritisation of government services for children and young people in out of home care.

The Sure Start initiative builds on the work of *Strong Families Safe Kids: Next Steps Action Plan (2021-2023)*, which underpins the Tasmanian Government's plan to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in care. This includes a commitment to review the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997 (Tas)*, to ensure alignment with the Strong Families Safe Kids reform agenda.

As part of this review, the Department for Education, Children and Young People will consider the authorising environment for securing essential services for children and young people in out of home care, under the Secretary's role as guardian.



What we will do

- Review the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997 (Tas)* to consider and make recommendations regarding appropriate levers, including adjustments to the Secretary's powers, to improve the timely provision of essential services for children and young people in out of home care via legislative change.
- Engage with a wide variety of stakeholders and conduct a thorough policy review of best practice to identify relevant legislative mechanisms.
- Monitor access to essential services, including timeliness, for children and young people in out of home care under the Secretary's role as guardian.

What this means for children and young people

- Children and young people in out of home care will have access to the critical services they need.
- Greater responsibility and accountability for government agencies working together to support the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in care.



ACTION

4

Implement a whole-of-agency (DECYP) approach to Care Teams that is underpinned by the six wellbeing domains.

Care Teams and Care Planning are integral to supporting quality care for some of our most vulnerable children and young people. Based on the six domains of child and youth wellbeing, high functioning Care Teams support a holistic approach to coordinated care that place the child at the centre and ensure they are included in decisions that impact them.

Improved case practice will be supported by the department's new *Feel Safe. Are Safe. Our Practice Approach* (2023), which is a rights-based model of participation for children and young people. This approach has been developed to ensure consistency and quality of practice across a continuum of care for children and young people.

What we will do

- Deliver a consistent approach and system understanding of Care Teams across the Department for Education Children and Young People (DECYP).
- Develop a new DECYP Care Team Policy outlining a shared approach to Care Teams across the agency, including a glossary of key terms to support collaboration between support services.

What this means for children and young people

- Greater engagement and shared decision making with children, young people and families on matters that impact them.
- DECYP staff will have greater clarity about the Care Team approach as they collaborate to meet the needs of children and young people with complex needs.
- Improved cross-sector collaboration between government and non-government services.



ACTION

5

Implement a Service Level Agreement with Homes Tasmania that prioritises the housing needs of children and young people in out of home care.

Access to housing is an important factor in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Tasmania's children and young people.

The Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) is working with Homes Tasmania to develop and implement a Service Level Agreement that will prioritise the housing needs of vulnerable children and young people who are known to the Advice and Referral Line, Child Safety Service and Community and Custodial Youth Justice.

What we will do

- Develop and implement a Service Level Agreement in collaboration with Homes Tasmania.
- Work with Homes Tasmania to ensure priority access to existing accommodation for vulnerable children and young people.
- Increase the supply of properties for Salaried Care for children and young people in out of home care.

What this means for children and young people

- A safe and secure place to live.
- Improved wellbeing outcomes.



Monitoring & Reporting

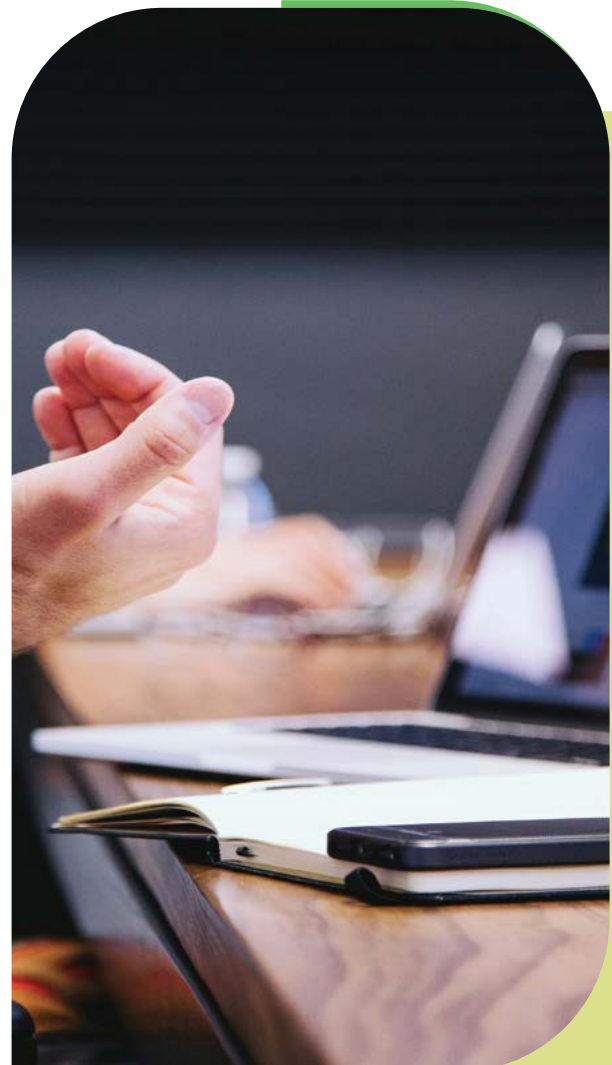
The Child and Youth Wellbeing Unit within the Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) will monitor the implementation of the Sure Start Action Plan and work collaboratively across agencies.

To ensure ongoing accountability, progress against the Sure Start Action Plan will be reported to the Safety and Wellbeing of Children and Young People Executive Committee, chaired by the Deputy Secretary, Keeping Children Safe, DECYP. We will also continue to report against alignment to our Departmental Strategic Plan and system goals to the Agency Executive.

DECYP will undertake a review of the Interagency Care Team Governance Model pilot at 6 months and an evaluation after 12 months to determine effectiveness and plans for ongoing delivery. These reviews will be reported to the Secretaries' Board Care Team Subcommittee and the Interagency Directors' Care Team, in addition to department's Statutory Guardian Committee and Complex Case Committee.

Progress against the Sure Start Action Plan will also contribute to whole-of-government monitoring and reporting as part of the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy: It takes a Tasmanian Village* (2021).

For further information or engagement with the Sure Start Action Plan, please contact the Child and Youth Wellbeing Unit email: wellbeing.unit@education.tas.gov.au



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