



Child Wellbeing Units (CWU) will be established in four major Government agencies who currently make over 60% of all reports to the Community Services Helpline: NSW Health, NSW Police, and the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Human Services (covering Juvenile Justice, Housing and Ageing, Disability and Home Care).

As of the 24th January mandatory reporters will only make a report to the Community Services Helpline where there is suspected 'risk of significant harm' as opposed to 'risk of harm'. For reports that do not meet the new threshold, mandatory reporters where appropriate identify potential responses within their own agency or organisation or make a referral to other services to provide support to the family, including the Family Referral Service (FRS) with the consent of the family. The amendments also include the addition of two new grounds for reporting that indicate a child may be at risk of significant harm:

- Parents or carers have not made proper arrangements and are unable or unwilling to arrange for their child to receive an education
- A series of acts or omissions when viewed together may establish a pattern of significant harm (cumulative impact).

To assist mandatory reporters determine whether or not a case needs to be reported to the Community Services Helpline, the Mandatory Reporter Guidance has been developed.

Why the changes?

Commissioner Wood was concerned about the number of children, young people and families who were not able to receive support from Community Services due to the statutory system being overwhelmed with reports. The reason for the establishment of the Child Wellbeing Units (CWUs) is that the Community Services Helpline should only be contacted for matters that require a statutory response. For those children who do not meet the new 'Risk of Significant Harm' threshold, the CWU will provide an alternative pathway for providing support.

The role of the Child Wellbeing Units

- Helping agency mandatory reporters identify whether a child meets the new risk of significant harm threshold
- Providing advice to mandatory reporters about possible service responses to children below the threshold

- Conduct Cumulative Risk Assessments and report matters that meet the threshold to the Community Services Helpline
- Driving better alignment and coordination of agency service systems over time, to enable better responses to children and families in need of assistance.

What support will the CWU provide for concerns below the threshold of risk of significant harm?

If the child is not considered at risk of significant harm, CWU officers will help to identify potential responses within your agency, that are intended to support the child, young person or family. If the agency working with the family is not in a position to offer a service directly to the family, the CWU will provide advice to mandatory reporters to determine access to suitable local services (both government and non-government including (FRS) with the intention of avoiding referral to the statutory child protection system. The Community Services Helpline will continue to provide feedback to mandatory reporters on the reports it receives. Where the statutory threshold isn't met, this will prompt mandatory reporters to make referral to local services.

The New South Wales Police Force (NSWPF) CWU will operate differently to the other CWU due to the sporadic, not continuing relationship Police Officers have with families. Families that fall below the Significant Harm threshold that are reported to our unit will be referred by CWU Assessment Officers to services. These referrals will be based on information from the Police report after an incident. Due to this reporting process it would be impractical and insensitive for Police Officers to ask families for consent for referrals at the time of an incident. Because of this, we would be asking your services to "cold call" families with offers of assistance. For example *"Hi my name is 'X', I'm calling from 'X', and we have received a referral from the Police for your family. The services we offer are 'X', and 'X'. Would you be interested in using these services?"* The family has no legal obligation to accept your offer of service, however if they decline the service offer we ask that you inform us for our information.

NSW Police CWU will be relying on a number of databases including the Mental Health Information and Services Directory to refer children and families. Over the next few months you may receive a call from the Police CWU regarding further information about your service OR to receive a referral. For more information please contact the Police CWU on 43520500. Note this number is not for the general public.