

Report on a page

This audit assessed how effectively Queensland public sector entities work together for the safety and wellbeing of Queensland children. We audited six public sector entities responsible for delivering family support and child protection services to determine whether:

- Queensland’s family support and child protection system is managed to ensure efficient and effective coordination across agencies
- Queensland government agencies share responsibility for the continuous improvement of the family support and child protection system.

Progress has been made but the system is still under pressure

Entities have made good progress implementing recommendations from reviews over recent years and reforming the family support and child protection system. In most cases, agencies cooperate well, but this can be further enhanced. However, the system remains under pressure from high demand and the growth in families with multiple and complex needs. The social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are likely to add further pressure to the system and agencies need to be prepared.

Early support is important but greater capacity is needed

Vulnerable families have greater support available to them now than previously and more report that the support is meeting their needs. Increasing the rates of consent by families in need of support would be likely to provide further benefits (at present half the families referred to family support services consent to receiving support). Improving the number of families engaging in these services would be likely to strengthen Queensland communities and reduce the pressure on the system. But at present, family support services do not have the capacity to provide significantly more services.

Enhancing the shared approach to child protection reports is needed

Demand on the child protection system remains high. The Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (Department of Child Safety) is generally quick to prioritise and investigate reports that indicate a child is in immediate danger but could improve timeliness for reports assessed as less urgent. Entities need to progress development of a multi-disciplinary intake process to integrate information from all relevant agencies, including non-government organisations, and to facilitate a shared responsibility for triaging and responding to all child harm reports.

The Department of Child Safety is finding it increasingly difficult to place children into care based on their needs. A shortage of carers and children staying in care longer are contributing to this challenge. Consequently, some children are placed into out-of-home care based on what is available rather than what matches their specific needs.

Audit recommendations

We made nine recommendations to improve the family support and child protection system.

