Chapter 7. Support service cases

Purpose

This procedure outlines the process for undertaking and managing a support service case, in order to reduce the likelihood of future harm to a child, or an unborn child after birth, or to provide ongoing support and assistance to a young person who is transitioning to adulthood, following their eighteenth birthday.

The provision of a support service case includes the development and regular review of a support plan and the use of other government agencies and funded services, to provide support to the family, pregnant woman or young person.

Key steps

1. Provide intervention through a support service case
2. Review a support service case
3. Close a support service case

What ifs - responding to specific support service case matters

Standards

1. The parents, pregnant woman or young person consent to the support service case.
2. All relevant participants are involved in the development of the support plan.
3. An independent person is arranged, with a pregnant woman’s consent, to help facilitate her participation and that of the unborn child’s family in a support plan prior to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child’s birth.
4. A support plan is reviewed at least every six months.
5. Intervention that exceeds 12 months is approved by the CSSC manager.

Practice skills (Key areas for reflection)

- Have I engaged in a collaborative way with the child, parents, pregnant woman or young person?
- Have I engaged appropriate services to assist the family to achieve the goals of the support plan?
- Have I engaged in a way that upholds the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle?
- Have I considered extended family members who may be available to support a pregnant woman after the birth of her child?
- Have I assisted the young person to access resources and services, and help establish formal and informal support networks and enduring relationships?
Authority

- *Child Protection Act 1999*
- Policy No. 597: Child related costs - Carer support
- Policy No. 598: Child related costs - Client support and family contact
- Policy No. 599: Child related costs - Education support
- Policy No. 630: Child related costs - In-home support funding
- Policy No. 596: Child related costs - Medical
- Policy No. 600: Child related costs - Outfitting
- Policy No. 595: Child related costs – Travel
- Policy No: 641 Decisions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- Policy No. 406: Support service case
- Policy No. 349: Transitioning from care into adulthood
Key steps - Support service cases

1. Provide intervention through a support service case
   1.1 Open a support service case
   1.2 Develop and record a support plan
   1.3 Implement the support plan
   1.4 Record information during the intervention

2. Review a support service case
   2.1 Review a support service case

3. Close a support service case
   3.1 Close a support service case

What ifs - responding to specific support service case matters

1. What if the child’s parents will not consent, or withdraw consent, to ongoing intervention?
2. What if a pregnant woman will not consent, or withdraws consent, to ongoing intervention?
3. What if intervention is required after the birth of a child?
4. What if a child is also subject to youth justice intervention?
5. What if new child protection concerns are received?
1. Provide intervention through a support service case

A support service case is one type of ongoing intervention and can only be opened when:

- an investigation and assessment has determined that a child was not in need of protection, however, the outcome of the family risk evaluation was 'high'
- an investigation and assessment has determined that an unborn child will be in need of protection after birth
- a young person requires support following their eighteenth birthday, where the young person was previously subject to either:
  - a child protection order granting custody or guardianship to the chief executive
  - a child protection order, where an approved carer was subsequently granted the long-term guardianship of the child.

For further information about decision-making regarding ongoing intervention refer to Chapter 2, 4.1 Determine whether there will be ongoing intervention and Chapter 3, 1. Decide the type of ongoing intervention.

A support service case involves providing, or helping provide, prevention, early intervention and support services to strengthen and support families, pregnant women and young people.

With the exception of a young person who is transitioning to adulthood, it is generally for less than 12 months duration, and will not involve the provision of an out-of-home care placement for a child who is not in need of protection.

Because a child subject to a support service case is not a child in need of protection, a case plan is not required, however, a support plan will be collaboratively developed with the family, pregnant woman or young person.

Unborn children

In circumstances where, following an investigation and assessment, it is assessed that an unborn child will be in need of protection after birth, the purpose of ongoing intervention is to offer help and support to the pregnant woman and where relevant, her partner or the father of the unborn child, to increase their capacity to protect the child following birth.

Any intervention by Child Safety must not interfere with the pregnant woman's rights and liberties and can only occur with the consent of the pregnant woman.

Young person

Where transition to adulthood planning has been undertaken and there are outstanding case plan goals that have not been met, intervention by Child Safety past the young person’s eighteenth birthday will occur by way of a support service case. A support service case may also be opened for a young person who was previously subject to a long-term guardianship order to a suitable person (where the guardian was formerly an approved foster or kinship carer).

A young person subject to a support service case is eligible for some financial support to meet the requirements of the Support plan, in accordance with relevant child related cost policies. Such costs will be negotiated with the CSSC manager prior to the development and finalisation of the ‘Support plan’.
1.1 Open a support service case

The child’s parents, pregnant woman or young person must consent to work with Child Safety and agree to participate in the development and implementation of a Support plan before a support service case can be opened.

If the child’s parents do not consent to the support service case, consult the senior team leader to re-consider whether a support service case is the appropriate response. For further information, refer to 1. What if the child’s parents will not consent, or withdraw consent, to ongoing intervention?

If the pregnant woman does not consent to a support service case, implement the necessary actions to facilitate an unborn child alert - refer to 2. What if a pregnant woman will not consent, or withdraws consent, to ongoing intervention?

As part of the decision to open a support service case, meet with the parents, pregnant woman or young person and discuss:

- the aim of the support service case, either:
  - to assist the parents or pregnant woman to address the identified child protection concerns so that no further intervention by Child Safety is required
  - to support and assist the young person’s transition to adulthood, until the identified goals of the support plan have been achieved
- the process of undertaking intervention through a support service case and the need for regular reviews of the support plan
- the right of a pregnant woman and the family of the unborn child to have an independent person help facilitate their participation in decision-making regarding a support plan, with the pregnant woman’s consent, prior to the birth of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child, refer to chapter 10.1 - What if a matter involves an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander unborn child?
- the expectation that the parents, or the pregnant woman, will work actively to address the identified concerns
- the need for Child Safety to take appropriate action:
  - should the level of risk to the child change during the period of intervention, to the extent that a child becomes a child in need of protection
  - should it be assessed there is unacceptable risk to a newborn baby.

1.2 Develop and record a support plan

Following the decision to open a support service case:

- develop a Support plan, in consultation with the child and family, pregnant woman or young person
- record the ‘support plan’ and attach the plan to the ‘Ongoing intervention’ event in ICMS
- actively engage the family or young person or pregnant woman and commence case work.

Ensure that the ‘support plan’ is able to be understood by all parties, and includes:

- the goals for intervention
• the actions required and who is responsible
• timeframes for the completion of tasks
• the factors relevant to each type of support service case, as outlined below.

Record information about whether an independent person helped facilitate the participation of the pregnant woman or the family of the unborn child in support planning, in the ‘Independent entity participation’ form in ICMS.

**Child and family**
Develop a ‘Support plan’ to determine the services required to strengthen and support the family to reduce the likelihood of future harm to the child. Planning will include agencies that will provide services to the family during the intervention period. If a parent has an intellectual disability, refer to the practice resource Supporting parents who have an intellectual disability.

**Young person**
In some situations, when a young person has transitioned to adulthood, intervention by Child Safety will need to continue past the young person’s eighteenth birthday to address significant needs for the young person in relation to housing, education or training, employment, social connectedness and necessary life skills. In this circumstance, develop a ‘Support plan’ in consultation with the young person that reflects the remaining goals that need to be completed from the young person’s transition to adulthood plan.

**Pregnant woman**
The ‘Support plan’ will focus on the protective needs the unborn child will have after birth, and interventions aimed at reducing the risks to the child. This involves providing, or helping provide, preventative and support services to the pregnant woman, and where relevant, her partner or the father of the unborn child. For a pregnant woman, consider including education and planning with the pregnant woman about safe infant care in the support plan, to reduce the risk of sudden unexpected death in infancy. For further information, refer to Child Health Information - Fact sheets on ‘Sudden unexpected deaths in infancy’ and ‘Safe sleeping resources’.

In addition to developing the ‘Support plan’:
• complete and forward an HRA Form 1: Unborn child high risk alert: Request for immediate notification when pregnant woman presents for delivery (HRA form 1) to the hospital/s where the pregnant woman is likely to give birth if immediate notification of the birth is necessary to ensure the child’s safety - refer to the Queensland Health - List of Maternity Hospitals and Nominated Positions, or contact relevant private or interstate hospitals
• attach the ‘HRA Form 1’ to the ‘ongoing intervention’ event in ICMS.

The key steps for responding to concerns for an unborn child are summarised in the Unborn Child Checklist.

If, during ongoing intervention, a pregnant woman indicates she is considering the child’s adoption, contact Adoption Services to request the provision of advice and assistance to the pregnant woman. For further information, refer to Chapter 10.4 Providing adoption services.

The support service case will continue until the birth of the child, unless the pregnant woman
withdraws consent to the intervention or the support needs of the woman are met prior to the birth of the child. If required, commence planning for intervention by Child Safety following the child’s birth.

If the pregnant woman withdraws consent, or refuses to consent to further ongoing intervention following the review of a ‘Support plan’, implement the necessary actions, as outlined in 2. What if a pregnant woman will not consent, or withdraws consent, to ongoing intervention? and the Unborn Child Checklist.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander unborn child

For support planning prior to the birth of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child, with the consent of the pregnant woman, provide the pregnant woman, and with her consent, the unborn child’s family with the opportunity to:

- provide information about the child and their family, community and culture
- inform decisions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support services to which the pregnant woman can be referred, including a referral to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Support Service - refer to Chapter 10.16 Referral to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family support service.

1.3 Implement the support plan

To support the child and family, pregnant woman or young person in the implementation of the ‘Support plan’:

- actively work with them to achieve the support plan goals and actions, within agreed timeframes
- maintain regular face-to-face and telephone contact
- support the family’s referral and engagement with the identified support services
- obtain information from the young person, family, pregnant woman and relevant agencies about progress towards the support plan goals.

If during implementation, new information becomes available or a change in circumstances indicates a threat to a child’s safety, but the threat does not reach the threshold for a notification, complete a safety assessment to review a child’s safety and inform future appropriate action. For further information refer to Chapter 2, 2.6 Complete the safety assessment.

1.4 Record information during the intervention

For the duration of the support service case, record the following in ICMS:

- case management screens for the child
- case notes about all contact with the child and family, pregnant woman or young person
- case notes outlining contact with, and the outcomes of intervention by, other services
- the family risk re-evaluation, if applicable - refer to 2. Review a support service case
- the safety assessment, if applicable - refer to 2. Review a support service case
- information about whether an independent person helped the pregnant woman or unborn child’s family participate in support planning for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child prior to birth, in the ‘Independent entity’ form in ICMS.
• any revised support plan
• the rationale for closing a support service case.

2. Review a support service case

2.1 Review a support service case

A Support plan must be reviewed at least every six months. More frequent reviews may be conducted, based on the circumstances of the case.

To review a ‘Support plan’ meet with the child and family, pregnant woman or young person, and where applicable, other agencies responsible for providing support and assistance during the period of intervention. The review is a collaborative process with all parties, to assess whether the agreed actions have been undertaken and whether the intervention has achieved the goals of the child and family, pregnant woman or young person involved.

The review process will also be informed by, considerations specific to the type of support service case, as outlined below.

Child and family

For the review of a support service case with a child and family:
• obtain updated information from the young person, family or pregnant woman and all agencies involved in implementing the support plan
• consider the outcome of Child Safety contact with the child and family for the period subject to review
• complete the family risk re-evaluation to assess the current level of risk for the child
• based on the above information, assess whether the goals of the support plan have been achieved, and future risk to the child has been reduced.

If the goals of the ‘Support plan’ have been met and the outcome of the family risk re-evaluation is ‘low’ or ‘moderate’, the case may be closed - refer to 3.1 Close a support service case for the actions required prior to closing the case.

If the outcome of the family risk re-evaluation remains ‘high’ and it is assessed that intervention via a support service case is still appropriate, discuss this with the parents and seek their consent to continue with the support service case. Where consent is provided, develop a revised ‘Support plan’, to reduce the likelihood of future harm to the child - refer to 1.2 Develop and record a support plan.

If the parents do not consent to a further period of ongoing intervention, refer to 3.1 Close a support service case for actions required prior to closing the case.

A support service case should generally not exceed 12 months. If after 12 months of intervention, the family risk re-evaluation indicates that the risk remains ‘high’, consider whether a support service case is still the most appropriate intervention to respond to the level of risk. A decision to keep the support service case open for longer than 12 months requires approval by the CSSC manager. Where approval is given, record the details in a case note in ICMS.

Pregnant woman

Review the ‘Support plan’ for a pregnant woman in the four week period prior to the child’s
estimated date of delivery, unless the six monthly review falls within this timeframe, to inform
decision-making and ensure there is a current assessment of the unborn child's protective needs
after birth. The SDM assessments are not used for the review of a support service case with a
pregnant woman.

When reviewing a support plan prior to the birth of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child,
with the pregnant woman’s consent, arrange for an independent person to help facilitate the
participation of the pregnant woman and unborn child’s family in decision-making, refer to
chapter 10.1 - What if a matter involves an Aboriginal or Torres Strait islander unborn child?

Consider updated information from the pregnant woman and the family of the unborn child, if
applicable, and all agencies involved in implementing the ‘Support plan’ and the outcome of
Child Safety contact with the pregnant woman during the intervention, to assess whether the
goals of the ‘Support plan’ have been achieved, and whether the likelihood of harm to the unborn
child after birth has been reduced.

In circumstances where it is assessed that ongoing intervention will be required after the birth of
the child, the review will incorporate the decision about the type of intervention that will best
meet the child’s needs (intervention with parental agreement or a child protection order).

In circumstances where it is assessed that informing the pregnant woman of planned
intervention by Child Safety would be likely to place the child at further risk after the birth, the
decision may be made not to inform the pregnant woman - for example, where there is a high
likelihood that the pregnant woman will relocate to avoid intervention.

The senior team leader is responsible for the decision not to inform the pregnant woman of
planned Child Safety intervention. This decision and the rationale must be recorded in a case
note in the ‘ongoing intervention’ event in ICMS.

Young person
Intervention with a young person may occur over a significant period of time, depending on the
developmental level, life stage and support needs of the young person. Consider information from
the young person and any agencies involved to assess whether goals have been achieved.
Support is to continue in line with the ‘Support plan’, until the identified goals have been achieved.

‘Support plan’ reviews are to occur following six months of ongoing intervention. The structured
decision making assessments are not used for the review of a support service case with a
young person over the age of 18 years.

3. Close a support service case

3.1 Close a support service case

Prior to deciding to close a support service case:

- complete a review of the Support plan and document the review outcome
- for a child and family (see below), complete a safety assessment if the case is likely to be closed
- determine and clarify whether ongoing support by other agencies is to continue
- take into account the factors specific to each type of support service case, as outlined
The senior team leader is responsible for approving a decision to close a support service case, unless this decision is made by the CSSC manager when considering whether to continue a support service case beyond a period of twelve months.

When the decision to close a case is approved:

- inform all parties of the decision - for further information, refer to Chapter 3, 4.1 Prepare for case closure
- close the case - refer to Chapter 3, 4.2 Complete actions to close a case.

### Child and family

A support service case with a child and family cannot be closed until the risk level is reduced to 'low' or 'moderate', unless the parents withdraw consent to the intervention, or the CSSC manager decides not to provide further intervention when the case has been open for longer than twelve months.

A support service case can be closed when it is assessed that the goals of the support service case have been achieved, and the family risk re-evaluation outcome is to 'low' or 'moderate'.

In all circumstances, complete a subsequent safety assessment prior to obtaining approval to close the case - for further information, refer to Chapter 2, 2.6 Complete the safety assessment, and:

- where there are no immediate harm indicators present within the household, seek approval to close the case and record the decision and rationale in ICMS
- where there are immediate harm indicators present within the household, consult with the senior team leader about the appropriate response or intervention required.

### Pregnant woman

A support service case with a pregnant woman will be closed when either:

- the support needs of the pregnant woman have been met
- the pregnant woman has given birth to a child, and a decision has been made about what, if any, further intervention is required
- the pregnant woman withdraws consent for the ongoing intervention - refer to 2. What if a pregnant woman will not consent, or withdraws consent, to ongoing intervention?

A safety assessment is not required prior to closing this type of support service case.

### Young person

Close the support service case for a young person, when either:

- the goals of the 'Support plan' have been achieved
- the CSSC manager decides the support service case will not continue
- the young person withdraws consent to the intervention.

A safety assessment is not required prior to closing this type of support service case.
**What ifs - responding to specific support service case matters**

1. **What if the child’s parents will not consent, or withdraw consent, to ongoing intervention?**

   In cases involving a child, where the outcome of the family risk evaluation tool is 'high' and consent is **not** given to a support service case, consult the senior team leader to re-consider whether a support service case is the appropriate Child Safety response to the child and family - refer to Chapter 3, 1. Decide the type of ongoing intervention.

   Where the decision to offer a support service case remains unchanged, record in ICMS:
   - the family’s refusal to consent to a support service case
   - the discussion held with the senior team leader, including the outcome and rationale for the decision.

   In cases involving a child, where the outcome of the family risk re-evaluation tool is 'high' and consent to the support service case is **withdrawn** following a period of ongoing intervention, complete a subsequent safety assessment to inform the actions to be taken - refer to 3.1 Close a support service case.

2. **What if a pregnant woman will not consent, or withdraws consent, to ongoing intervention?**

   When it has been assessed that an unborn child will be in need of protection after their birth and the pregnant woman does **not** consent to intervention with a support service case, no ongoing intervention can occur.

   Similarly, where a pregnant woman withdraws her consent to the support service case, during the period of ongoing intervention, ongoing intervention cannot continue.

   In **both** of these circumstances:
   - make every effort, including sending a follow up letter, to:
     - alert the pregnant woman to the potential risks identified to her unborn child after birth
     - provide information about support services in the community to assist her and her family prior to the birth of her child
   - advise the pregnant woman that either a new notification or a child protection order may be required when the child is born. However, this information must **not** be provided to the pregnant woman when it is assessed that, by providing this information, the child may be placed at further risk after their birth
   - record an 'unborn child alert' on the person records of the mother and the unborn child - refer to Chapter 1, 9. What if an alert needs to be recorded in ICMS?
   - complete and forward either, or both:
     - an HRA Form 1: Unborn child high risk alert: Request for immediate notification when pregnant woman presents for delivery (HRA Form 1) to the hospital/s where the pregnant woman is likely to give birth - refer to Queensland Health List of Maternity Hospitals and Nominated Positions
• a letter to the private or interstate hospital/s where the pregnant woman is likely to
give birth
• attach the ‘HRA Form 1’ to the ‘investigation and assessment’ event in ICMS
• consider whether a referral to the SCAN team is warranted, or if the case is open to the
SCAN team system, update the SCAN team - refer to Information Coordination Meetings
(ICM) and the Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) Team System Manual
• provide the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre with a Child Safety After Hours
Service Centre: After hours referral form and any additional relevant information,
including a copy of the ‘HRA Form 1’
• recontact the pregnant woman’s medical practitioner, if known, to:
  • discuss the concerns identified
  • request that information be shared with relevant health professionals such as the
midwife or social work services
  • ask that Child Safety be advised of the birth of the child
• recontact any services previously involved in the provision of support services to the
pregnant woman, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Support
Service or Family Wellbeing Service, as appropriate, to inform them that the pregnant
woman has withdrawn her consent to ongoing intervention.

When the child is born, commence the most appropriate type of ongoing intervention or record a
new notification if an up-to-date risk assessment is required.

3. What if intervention is required after the birth of a child?

When at the time of the child's birth, Child Safety is working with the woman via a support
service case, and ongoing intervention is to continue after the birth with the agreement of the
woman or the parents:
  • close the support service case
  • open an intervention with parental agreement case - refer to Chapter 6, Intervention with
parental agreement
  • commence case planning for the child - refer to Chapter 4, Case planning.

When at the time of the child's birth there is no open support service case, because the woman
has not consented to the intervention, but an investigation and assessment completed prior to
birth had a 'substantiated - child in need of protection' outcome either:
  • commence the most appropriate type of ongoing intervention
  • record a new notification when it is determined that an up-to-date risk assessment is
required.

4. What if a child is also subject to youth justice intervention?

If a child is subject to a support service case and youth justice intervention, ensure service
delivery coordination for the duration of the support service case. It may also be appropriate to
invite the child’s youth justice case worker to a meeting to develop, or review, a Support plan.
For further information, refer to Chapter 3, 5. What if a child is subject to ongoing intervention
and youth justice intervention?
5. **What if new child protection concerns are received?**

When child protection concerns are received about a child subject to ongoing intervention, take action to ensure the child’s immediate safety and determine the most appropriate response - refer to Chapter 3, 2. What if new child protection concerns are received?

**Resources**

**Forms and templates**
- Child Safety After Hours Service Centre: After hours referral form
- HRA Form 1: Unborn child high risk alert: Request for immediate notification when pregnant woman presents for delivery
- Support plan
- Unborn Child Checklist

**Child Safety resources**
- Information Coordination Meetings (ICM) and the Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) Team System Manual
- Practice resource: Supporting parents who have an intellectual disability
- Brochure: Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families take part in decisions

**External resources**
- Child Health Information - Fact sheets
- Queensland Health - List of Maternity Hospitals and Nominated Positions