



working together for children and young  
people with high and complex needs

## **Communications Plan 2009 - 2011**

**A joint initiative of the Ministries of Health, Education and Social  
Development, including Child, Youth and Family Services**

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## Background

The High and Complex Needs Interagency Strategy (2001), signed by the Ministers of Health, Education, and Social Development (including Child, Youth and Family Services) provides the strategic framework for agencies to work together for children with complex needs. To be effective, the Interagency Strategy needs to be understood, owned and implemented in these sectors at all levels – from practitioners and local managers through to national managers and executives.

The vision and goals of the Interagency Strategy are to improve outcomes for children and young people with high and complex needs through effective interagency collaboration by:

- fostering collaboration to improve outcomes
- improving the effectiveness of interventions
- building sector capability.

The responsibility of implementing the Interagency Strategy lies with agencies; they need to make interagency collaboration a business-as-usual activity, so:

- there are strong working relationships between agencies
- children with complex needs are identified earlier and can have their needs addressed sooner
- there is a shared knowledge and understanding about what is effective for children with complex needs.

The HCN Unit has a unique national overview of the practice and services as it supports staff and managers across health, disability, education and Child, Youth and Family to identify, plan and better meet children's needs when they are high and complex. It provides tools, resources and information to support interagency working and, where necessary, funding for the purchase of additional services. This overview can be used to build knowledge and awareness across agencies to help inform policy, practice and service development.

The previous communications plan focused on increasing the visibility and understanding of the Interagency Strategy. While this has improved, some misperceptions still persist and need to be addressed. This communications plan continues the focus on increasing the visibility and understanding, but specifically seeks to increase agency ownership of the Interagency Strategy.

In this report, the terms *child* or *children* refer to children and young people with high and complex needs. The terms 'agency' or 'agencies' refer to an organisation – government or government-funded disability Needs Assessment and Service Coordination organisations – that work in collaboration with other agencies to improve outcomes for children and young people with high and complex needs.

## Communications purpose

A multi-layered communications approach is needed, as the Strategy has a wide range of stakeholders with different needs.

The communications approach will be implemented on two key levels:

1. At an agency level:

- supporting collaborative work by providing resources, education and support for stakeholders so they can better help children with high and complex needs
- encouraging ownership of the Interagency Strategy so that this way of working becomes business-as-usual.
- utilising the HCN Unit's overview and information to help inform service and practice development in each agency.

2. At a practice level:

- encouraging early recognition of children with complex needs
- providing resources and processes so better quality and more targeted plans can be developed.



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## Communications objectives

Implementation of this communications plan will:

- assist agencies understanding of how to better help children with high and complex needs
- promote interagency collaboration as the best way to create opportunities for change for children with complex needs.

Communication strategies include:

- *support* - provide stakeholders with information materials that are tailored, targeted and easily accessible
- *consult* - listen, get feedback and respond – regularly consult stakeholders, amend communications to meet their needs and provide feedback on any changes and developments
- *promote* - 'show and tell' the outcomes and benefits of interagency collaboration through real-life examples and face-to-face meetings, presentations and forums
- *grow leadership* – practitioners who have experienced success through interagency collaboration are the best advocates; they need to be supported and encouraged so they can become ambassadors within their own agencies
- *lead by example* - ensure the HCN Unit leads by example in quality, professionalism and interagency collaboration; this means all communications must be high quality, timely, accessible, supportive and consistent in style
- *share success* – capture and disseminate success stories to promote best practice and dispel misperceptions
- *provide information* – to help agencies develop an understanding of how to build capability in their workforce to address the complex needs of children, to fill service shortfalls and to help bridge the knowledge gap caused by staff turnover.

## Stakeholders

The key stakeholder groups that need to receive communications are:

### **Ministry of Social Development, including:**

- Policy Manager – Child, Family and Community Policy
- Family and Community Services
- Strengthening Families
- Child, Youth and Family Services, including:
  - National Office / Executive Committee
  - Chief Social Worker
  - Youth Justice Managers
  - Regional Practice Advisors (including Care and Protection and Youth Justice)
  - Regional Disability Advisors
  - Care Services Managers
  - Residence Managers
  - Regional Directors
  - Operations Managers
  - Site Managers
  - Practice Leaders
  - Social Workers

### **Ministry of Education – Special Education, including:**

- National Management Team
- Group Manager Services
- Manager – Professional Practice Unit
- Manager – Ongoing Reviewable Resourcing Scheme (ORRS)
- Practice Leader – Behaviour
- District Managers
- Service Managers
- Practice Leaders
- Senior Advisors
- Practitioners

### **Ministry of Health and health and disability sector, including:**

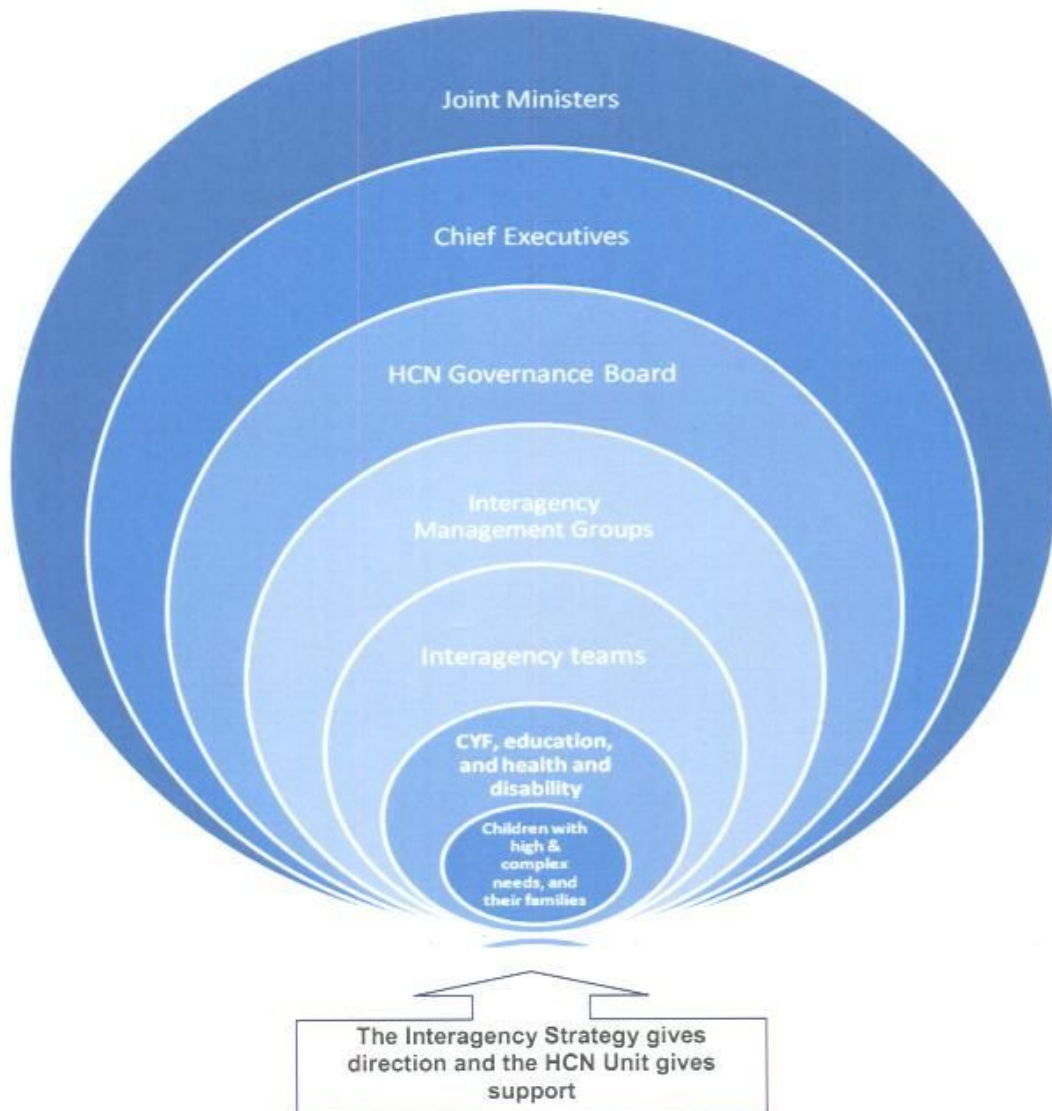
- Chief Advisor – Child and Youth Health
- Chief Advisor – Disability
- Senior Advisor – Child and Adolescent Mental Health
- Disability Senior Leadership Team
- Mental Health Management Team
- Needs Assessment And Service Co-Ordination (NASC - Disability) Managers and Team Leaders

- CAMHS Managers and Team Leaders
- Practitioners

**Local stakeholders, by role:**

- Interagency Management Groups
- Services Coordinators
- Finance Contacts
- Lead Agency Managers.

## Model of Interagency Strategy relationships



## Key messages

We all need to be speaking the same language. The following key messages, when used consistently, will help build understanding and ownership of this way of working. They also help to dispel misperceptions.

### Overarching

- These are our children – they are the focus of our work and they are some of the most vulnerable children from your community; they need your agency to work with others to make a real difference.
- The High and Complex Needs Interagency Strategy recognises the need to work differently with children with multiple and complex needs – needs that were often unmet due to service gaps and shortfalls in local provision.
- Each agency is responsible for understanding, implementing and supporting collaborative working so that it becomes business-as-usual.
- The HCN Unit supports staff and managers across health, disability, education and Child, Youth and Family to identify, plan and better meet children's needs when they are high and complex. We provide tools, resources and information to support interagency working and, where necessary, funding for the purchase of additional services.
- Agencies are committed to working together – there are 24 Interagency Management Groups across the country that meet to provide leadership for collaboration and to seek local solutions for children in their community.
- When agencies are working well together, they can meet most children's needs in the community; however, for some, it is clear when agencies don't have the resources to meet the child's needs – that is when HCN funding can help.
- HCN funding is designed to support local agencies develop a plan to provide short-term, intensive interventions aimed at creating opportunities for change for the child.
- HCN funding brings additional skills and expertise to meet needs and address barriers to progress.

### To make it work

- No agency can do this work alone, but only your agency can contribute its specific knowledge, even if it's a small part of the solution.
- It's about what you can do, not what you can't do, to meet children's needs – you need to work flexibly and focus on finding solutions.
- It takes time and effort to work with these children – practitioners need to be given time to focus on these cases.
- Interagency Management Groups meet regularly and are made up of managers from CAMHS, CYF, Special Education, NASC (disability), and the HCN Advisor. These groups prioritise children with high needs and monitor their progress.

- When Interagency Management Groups have up-to-date assessment information with recommendations about what the child needs to make gains, they can identify if there are service shortfalls and decide whether HCN funding is needed.
- To access HCN funding, two or more agencies need to be involved and agree that they cannot meet the needs of the child within local services.

### **Supporting practice**

- No one thing makes a child's needs complex – it is a combination of factors, including adverse life experiences, problem behaviours and diagnoses that make it challenging for agencies to address the child's needs.
- Children with complex needs should be identified early to provide the best opportunity to break negative patterns of adverse life experiences and escalating problem behaviours.
- When children have complex needs, time, collaboration and a high level of expertise is needed to address them, as the usual responses from agencies haven't worked.
- Working together takes time and effort, but the results are worth it – a child with HCN funding benefits from a wider range of expertise and services.
- The collaborative planning process enables practitioners to develop a shared understanding of the child's needs and identify the most appropriate interventions.
- Successful outcomes are more likely when:
  - the child's views are sought and expressed in the plan
  - the right agencies are involved and the most appropriate expertise is available
  - team members are clear about their roles and have a shared understanding of the child's needs
  - interventions address the key concerns
  - goals are specific, measureable and achievable
  - interventions draw from the child's strengths and interests.

### **Roles**

- The Application Panel has representation from health, education and Child, Youth and Family and provides a national overview to ensure equity of access.
- The Services Coordinator supports the team to collate the application and to develop detailed, individualised interagency plans.
- The Plan Approval Panel is comprised of experienced practitioners from each agency around the country. It approves the interagency plan and funding, monitors the child's progress and the use of funding, and advises on good practice from each agency's perspective.
- The Lead Agency Manager has the overall implementation of the plan at a local level; they identify a finance contact to monitor expenditure.
- Liaise with the HCN Advisor from your region – they can provide support and guidance.

## **Misperceptions**

1. *Child, Youth and Family needs to be involved before you can access HCN funding.*  
No – a number of HCN-funded children have no involvement from CYF. Two or more agencies need to agree that they cannot meet the needs within local services in order to apply for HCN funding. This can be disability and education, or education and mental health.
2. *Everyone and everything needs to be exhausted before you consider HCN funding.*  
Services need to be explored, not exhausted, before applying for HCN funding. You just need to be clear that the usual services cannot meet the child's needs.
3. *We have to spend over \$35,000 on this client before we can access HCN funding.*  
There is no cost threshold, as with CYF High Cost Case Funding, that an agency needs to meet before applying. The decision to apply should be based on the child's needs and whether there is capacity to meet these needs within local services. Waiting for costs to mount up means opportunities for early intervention have been missed.
4. *What's the point in going to all the effort of applying if funding is only for one year?*  
Although funding is approved for one year at a time, most children receive funding for two or more years. It's not just about the money. Every child's needs are different and they progress at different rates. What agencies can contribute also varies.
5. *These kids are too hard.*  
Yes, they are hard, especially when you're working on your own. By working with other agencies and accessing HCN funding you get support from your colleagues and access to the best expertise available to help with planning and addressing children's needs.
6. *The process requires too much paperwork.*  
Services coordinators complete the paperwork using the information from team members. You only need to supply information that relates to your casework. For example, the application form is 12 pages long, but you only need to supply about two pages of information.
7. *These kids represent only a small portion of my work; the process is too complex to make it worth it.*  
These children are already taking up a lot of time. If you invest your time in a different way, you will move from being reactive to proactive and you will have coordinated support from the team. Most plans receive \$40,000 - \$80,000 of extra funding.

8. *Why should I bother applying? Applications just get declined anyway.*

In 2009, only one application was declined. Sometimes an application or a plan is deferred if the Panel needs more information to be confident in its decision. The rates of deferral have been steadily decreasing over time.

9. *All we need is the money.*

While the money helps, it's the coordinated assessment, analysis and planning that makes the difference. The Plan Approval Panel provides oversight to ensure that good practice interventions with relevant expertise are in place for children with the most complex needs, irrespective of where they come from.

10. *We've found them a placement, so we don't need HCN funding anymore.*

Having a stable placement only addresses one area of a child's needs – it doesn't address the underlying issues that may have contributed to previous placement breakdown(s). In order to effect lasting change for these children, an interagency plan needs to address all of a child's priority needs – not just one.

## Communication tools

In recognition of the different information needs and interests of stakeholders, the following communications tools and strategies will be used.

### Creating visibility and ownership

Agencies are responsible for implementing collaborative working on a day-to-day basis. This work needs to become more visible and business-as-usual.

The Governance Board can take a more active role in ensuring key information about the Interagency Strategy gets fed back to agencies by ensuring:

- the *High and Complex Needs Client Information Report* and the *Annual Report on the High and Complex Needs Interagency Strategy* are shared with each agency's leadership teams, as they contain key information about service shortfalls to help inform service planning
- the findings of the *Annual Review of Closed Cases* are shared and promulgated amongst agency practice leaders so they can help build workforce capability
- there is at least one opportunity per annum for a forum with senior management to ensure information exchange and feedback.

### Supporting leadership by managers

If Interagency Management Groups are more confident in their role and decision making processes, they can provide more visible proactive leadership for collaboration at a local level by:

- holding interagency staff professional development days to build knowledge of each others' services and ways of working
- ensuring access to appropriate services and helping to problem solve where this is not occurring
- being aware of all the children with complex needs in their community and being accountable for addressing their needs
- actively sharing success stories from collaborative working.

### Supporting leadership by practitioners

The Plan Approval Panel is comprised of experienced practitioners from each agency and from around the country. Panel members can act as ambassadors within their respective agencies by sharing their experience of the Panel, correcting misperceptions and delivering key messages.

HCN Advisors work with senior practitioners across agencies to encourage their understanding of eligibility for HCN funding and how to apply. As senior practitioners become more familiar and confident with the processes, they will be more able to support staff identify children with high and complex needs.

There is the potential to establish an Expert Advisory Pool to advise the Plan Approval Panel on the children with the most complex needs. This pool would be made up of the recognised experts and academics in their areas; they could assist with influencing practice and learning in their respective areas of expertise.

### **The HCN Unit website**

The website is a key medium to communicate to stakeholders about the Interagency Strategy and HCN funding. To ensure the website is easy to access and has maximum functionality for stakeholders, we will:

- host the website in-house
- make the website e-government compliant
- redesign the website to ensure information is more accessible and targeted for different stakeholder audiences (for example, practitioners and Interagency Management Groups)
- create password protected areas for different audiences to share information and have discussion forums
- web-enable the self-assessment tool so that it can be completed online; this will help groups to be clear about their strengths and what areas need further attention
- explore whether a web-interface for our client financial plans is possible, which would help to streamline the administration functions
- explore whether the application and plan forms can be completed online.

### **Regular updates and newsletters**

The HCN Unit will continue to send electronic updates to different stakeholder groups to alert them to new information, resources, or changes in process. Currently, they are regularly sent to agency managers (members of the Interagency Management Groups) and services coordinators. Practitioners will receive updates twice per year.

Each year, two hard copy newsletters for all stakeholders will be published in March and September containing case studies, updated client information and a profile of collaborative interagency activity.

### **Resource materials**

Resource materials have been developed for different stakeholders to refer to when they have specific tasks to fulfil. These will be updated regularly and available on the website, and include:

- Interagency Management Group folders – providing structure and processes for decision making and guidance back to practitioners
- Lead Agency Manager folders – key information at each step of the process
- Finance and administration contact information – step-by-step processes with examples for maintaining individual client financial records
- Services Coordinators folders– induction and process information for working with teams to collate applications and plans
- Practitioner information– identifying information practitioners need to provide at different stages of the process, from case presentation to the interagency management group to participating in detailed planning.

The team planning resources help guide interagency teams as they work to develop plans for children with complex needs. As more teams use these resources, we will update them based on feedback about the kind of issues services coordinators and teams have found challenging.

### **Support from HCN Unit staff**

In order to ensure stakeholders are well supported to access and use the available resources, the HCN Unit Manager will attend each Interagency Management Group meeting once per year to ensure resources and supports are meeting the groups' needs, and to determine where further support is needed.

HCN Advisors will continue to attend and support Interagency Management Groups at every meeting, where possible. They will provide support to services coordinators during application and plan development, support to Lead Agency Managers to implement plans and support to practitioners as they identify children with high and complex needs. HCN Advisors are a key conduit for the exchange of information.

The Leader Professional Practice Development will provide support to HCN Advisors, managers, services coordinators and practitioners, and will ensure that key messages are clearly conveyed through the development and implementation of appropriate resources.

Sharing success is a key way to foster best practice and dispel misperceptions. Case studies will be available on the website and promoted in newsletters. The *Annual Review of Closed Cases*, the *High and Complex Needs Client Information Report*, resources and reviews will also be made available on the website and in other key communications.

### **National and regional forums**

National and regional forums for stakeholders will be held to promote interagency collaboration, information exchanges and good practice, as well as to deliver key messages and new resource material. These forums will be audience-specific and interagency (whenever possible).

### **Sharing information**

Each year, the following information will be shared to enhance stakeholders' understanding:

- *High and Complex Needs Client Information Report*, which includes analysis of client characteristics, volumes, plans and a breakdown of funding
- *Annual Review of Closed Cases*, which assesses the level of goal achievement and what works for these children
- *Business Plan*, sponsored by the Governance Board, which indicates the future direction of the HCN Unit work programme
- *The Annual Report on the High and Complex Needs Interagency Strategy*, which is a summary of the three reports mentioned above.

## Timing

Although the role of the HCN Unit is ongoing and always developing, there is a regular annual cycle to the HCN Unit's communications, which means that information can be developed and shared in a coordinated manner.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Review of Closed Cases	Yellow	Red stripes	Diagonal stripes	Diagonal stripes	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Yellow
Client Information Report	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Yellow	Red stripes	Diagonal stripes	Diagonal stripes	Blue	Blue
Business Plan	Blue	Blue	Yellow	Black	Yellow	Red stripes	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
Annual Report	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Yellow	Black	Yellow	Red stripes	Blue	Blue

	Board presentation
	Draft presented to the Board for comments and circulation
	Presentation to managers and key stakeholders – newsletters, etc
	General circulation via presentations and key messages
	Preparation for next report

## Evaluation

The strongest indicator of effective communication is that stakeholders understand and feel confident working together and using the resources to help them with particular cases. However, this is obviously influenced by change in personnel – managers on Interagency Management Groups, services coordinators, and practitioners participating in interagency teams; the work of communicating our messages is constant.

We anticipate that the historical misperceptions will change, and that collaborating and using the new resources will become business-as-usual for those who support children with high and complex needs.

We will rely on feedback from and information exchanges with:

- Interagency Management Groups, via the HCN Unit Manager, Leader Professional Practice Development, or HCN Advisors
- forums for each agency
- practitioners involved with the teams
- the website, including compiled website statistics, the use of the self-assessment tool and online surveys
- quality surveys to various stakeholders, including at the completion of interagency plans and at forums/regional training days.

We will also use a variety of mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of this plan, including:

- timeliness of submissions of applications and interagency plans
- fewer deferrals of applications and interagency plans
- positive feedback from the Plan Approval Panel about the quality of interagency plans
- quarterly reviews of the child's progress.