Planning the investigation and assessment

The table below outlines key actions to be considered in the planning process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child protection history</th>
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<tr>
<td>Read and consider all child protection history, which may include indicators of cumulative harm, for the child, the child’s family and others living in the child’s household. This will include information in ICMS, electronic files, paper files and intake records, previous SCAN team information, child death review and paper files in other CSSCs. Where indicated, obtain information from interstate and overseas.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Cultural considerations and independent person</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determine if there are cultural considerations that need to be included as part of the planning process, for example, obtaining information about cultural protocols, such as, how to approach the family, use of a cultural elder, matriarch or patriarch or the need for a culturally appropriate support person. When planning an investigation and assessment for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child, staff will consult with other child safety staff who are able to provide cultural advice, or a local Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander community representative (sharing non-identifying information).</td>
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<tr>
<td>The CSO is responsible for collecting accurate details of the cultural identity of subject children and their family members.</td>
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<td>When the cultural identity of a child or family members is not known at the planning stage, information must be sought about the cultural identity of children and their families as part of the investigation and assessment. When the cultural identity of a child or family member has been provided at the intake stage, the CSO is to confirm the information provided with the child and family during the investigation and assessment.</td>
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<td>In particular, the CSO must be able to record whether a person is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or both, in order to meet the legislative requirements of the Child Protection Act 1999, section 6.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The CSO should be aware of their obligations during the investigation and assessment to arrange, with the child and family’s consent, for an independent person to facilitate the child’s and family’s participation in significant decisions during the investigation and assessment process. This includes facilitating their participation in the development of an immediate safety plan, and or deciding an appropriate placement if required. Staff should take this into consideration when planning the investigation and assessment to allow sufficient time for these arrangements to be made, including determining suitability of an independent person.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The CSO is not required to arrange for an independent person to facilitate participation in a significant decision if it is not practicable and urgent action is required to protect the child.</td>
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Assessment and Service Connect (ASC) co response

When planning an investigation and assessment, CSOs, in consultation with a senior team leader or senior practitioner should consider an ASC co-response where appropriate. ASC co-responders can provide a timely response to establish connections and link a child and family to the required support during the investigation and assessment to increase a child’s safety. An ASC co-response may not be appropriate for circumstances including (and not limited to):

- where information identifies an immediate harm indicator or danger is present in the family home and the child is unsafe
- where, as part of the Investigation and Assessment, an authorised officer is using, or is likely to use, powers under the CPA, such as enter and search (section 16), contact with children at school or care service (section 17), taking a child into custody (section 18) or moving a child to a safe place (section 21)
- responses where QPS determine the alleged harm may involve the commission of a criminal offence and determine the need to investigate.

In these circumstances, the CSO may consult with an ASC co-responder to seek specialist advice.

An ASC co-response can be considered for notifications with a 24-hour response timeframe, depending on concerns raised within the notification. However, the suitability of an ASC response is also dependent upon the ASC co-responder’s capacity to accept the referral and act within Child Safety’s 24-hour response timeframe. Child Safety may commence the investigation and assessment in order to meet the response timeframe then engage an ASC co-responder at a later time.

Joint investigations with the Queensland Police Service

Determine if a joint investigation with the QPS is required and consult with the QPS about roles and sequence of actions. Determine where contact or interviews will take place. Ensure the QPS are advised of any criminal matters related to a child and are provided with relevant information to meet the legislative requirement of the Child Protection Act 1999, section 14(2).

SCAN team system

Consider referral to a SCAN team if the matter would benefit from a multi-agency discussion, or if an emergency SCAN team meeting is required. A referral can also be made once the investigation and assessment has commenced if the matter meets the mandatory referral criteria.

Consultation with Queensland Health

Identify whether the child is receiving treatment or care as a hospital inpatient. Prior to commencing the investigation and assessment, gather information and consult with key health professionals who have been involved in providing the treatment or care to the child.

Consultation should also be undertaken in relation to unborn children or newborn children, where child protection concerns are identified and the investigation and assessment is commenced prior to the child’s birth or prior to discharge from hospital.
## Consultation with Disability Services / National Disability Insurance Agency

Identify whether the child has a disability and may have had contact or been in receipt of services from Disability Services or the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). Prior to commencing the investigation and assessment, gather information and consult with key personnel from Disability Services or NDIA who have been involved in providing services to the child.

## Genogram

Gather preparatory information for a family genogram to assist the investigation and assessment. The genogram should be updated and added to during the process and used to inform placement options, safety and support networks and case planning, if required. For an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child, the genogram will also inform who will be invited to participate in a family-led decision-making process, where relevant.

## Key concerns from the notification to be addressed

Identify the key concerns or issues from the notification that need to be addressed with the family during the investigation and assessment.

## Interviews with children

Plan the interviews of all subject children (except where this is not appropriate due to age or developmental reasons, or where the differential pathway response 'contact with other professional' is used). Plan the sequence of interviews, who will conduct the interviews, who will be present for the interviews and where the interviews will take place. Consider whether there are other children who will be interviewed and plan for these interviews, in accordance with the procedure on interviewing and sighting children. If the QPS are involved in the investigation, consult with them about the timing of the interviews. Consider whether a child may need to be interviewed using powers under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, section 17.

## Interviews with parents and others

Identify all relevant adults who will be interviewed and plan for the interviews, including who will conduct the interviews and where they will take place. If the QPS are involved in the investigation, consult with them about the timing of the interviews.
Gathering information from other sources

Identify key people, both personal and professional who can provide reliable information about the child and family, such as a previous CSO, a key family member, the QPS, a doctor, a teacher, a previous counsellor or another government or non-government agency or service. Where it is known that services have been accessed by the family in relation to domestic violence, drug and alcohol, cultural support, mental health or disability, these services should be consulted to gain further information about the family, including worries, strengths and resources the family may have, support or cultural issues. Where appropriate, these services may be able to provide assistance to the family during the investigation and assessment process. Where a child is Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander, consultation should occur throughout the investigation and assessment with key family and or community members, identified by the family, regarding cultural considerations, protocols and child rearing practices.

Contact with the notifier

Contact the notifier to clarify details and gather additional information, if required.

Use of Interpreter services

Arrange for interpreter services to assist with interviews and communication with a child and family where the child or family is from a culturally and linguistically diverse background or has a disability that would require an interpreter to facilitate communication.

In no circumstances should another family or community member be used as an interpreter. The role of the interpreter is to translate the interview and assist with communication, it is not as a support person or advocate for the child or family.

All interpreters should be sought through an accredited interpreting agency, and financial approval sought from the financial delegate prior to engaging an interpreting service. The Australian Government, through the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, provides a Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) for people who do not speak English. TIS can be contacted by telephone on 131 450. Auslan and other sign language interpreters can be organised through Deaf Services Queensland, who can be contacted by telephone on (07) 3892 8500.

Personal safety issues

Determine whether there are personal safety issues indicated in the history or current information and develop safety strategies, as outlined in Chapter 10.11 Staff safety and well-being. Where support or protection is required for the CSO during the investigation and assessment, contact the QPS.
### Co-worker/s and support persons

Clarify roles and responsibilities for the investigation and assessment. Identify other persons for support and assistance if required.

The investigation and assessment plan may be revised during the investigation and assessment.

As part of preparation, the CSO will consider any other actions that may be required as part of the investigation and assessment.

### Non-consent by parents

Consider and plan for situations where an assessment order or use of powers may be required to have contact with a child.

### Placement

If the concerns received indicate that the placement of a child may be required, placement options within the family must be thoroughly explored prior to pursuing general foster care options. If the child is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, the CSO must arrange, with the child and family’s consent, for an independent person to facilitate their participation in the decision about where to place the child, unless the arrangement of an independent person is not practicable and urgent action is required.

### Medical examination

Consider if a medical examination or treatment may be required for a child, and if so, undertake consultation with the appropriate health or medical services.

### Use of QPS assistance

A CSO may request QPS assistance to undertake their obligations or exercise powers under the *Child Protection Act 1999*. This request can be made by telephone to a relevant Child Protection Investigation Unit, Criminal Investigation Branch or police station.

### Legal representatives

Parents and children may have a legal representative present during an interview. Where a child or their parents elect to have a legal representative present, the CSO will make all reasonable attempts to accommodate the request. Information may also be provided to the family about accessing Legal Aid Queensland services by contacting the Client Information Services call centre by telephone on 1300 65 11 88.