



Government of **Western Australia**
Department for **Child Protection**
and **Family Support**

STATE EMERGENCY WELFARE PLAN (INTERIM)

ANNEX C

DISASTER INFORMATION SUPPORT AND CARE CENTRE

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES GUIDE

(May 2016)

Prepared by the Department for Child Protection and Family Support

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Amendment List

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| 1 | May 2016 | Changed from Westplan Welfare Addendum to State Emergency Welfare Plan Annex C Disaster Information Support And Care Centre Operational Procedures Guide | |
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Copies of this State Emergency Welfare Plan are available on

- the Department for Child Protection and Family Support internet site: www.childprotection.wa.gov.au
- the State Emergency Management Committee internet site: www.semc.wa.gov.au/resources/policies-and-plans

References:

London Resilience preparing for emergencies, June 2010, *London Humanitarian Assistance Plan Version 3*.

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire HAC Group, March 2011, *Nottingham and Nottinghamshire LRF Humanitarian Assistance Centre Plan*.

Stone, Carol of the 7JAC Steering Group, March 2009, *Lessons learned by the 7th July Assistance Centre staff, steering group and partners*.

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1. Outline

The aim of this guide is to provide an agreed model for the establishment of a multi-agency, multi-disciplined Disaster Information Support and Care Centre (DISCC) in Western Australia.

This facility provides a seamless welfare response of sensitive practical and effective crisis support to bereaved families and friends after a major disaster, and where mass Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) processes are required.

2. Aim

A DISCC is established under the State Emergency Welfare Plan at the request to the Department of Child Protection and Family Support (CPFS) by the Hazard Management Agency (HMA)/Controlling Agency, in consultation with WA Police, as a result of a major emergency where:

- (1) significant personal loss and grief is experienced by a large number of people;
- (2) existing infrastructure and services are not considered by the requesting authority to be adequate or appropriate; and
- (3) mass Disaster Victim Identification processes are to be utilised.

If more than one DISCC is required to be opened CPFS will be responsible for coordinating all DISCCs.

3. Guide Responsibilities

Under the Western Australian Emergency Management Arrangements CPFS has responsibility for the provision of Welfare Support services to those persons affected by a disaster. This responsibility extends to those directly affected (survivors and victims), their families and friends, and the general community impacted by the event.

Under the Western Australian Emergency Management Arrangements CPFS is responsible for:

- State Emergency Welfare Plan
- Annex A – Registration and Reunification
- Annex B – Reception
- Annex C - Disaster Information Support And Care Centre Operational Procedures Guide

CPFS through this plan and annexes provides assistance to families and friends of those affected by a disaster including personal support services and counselling.

This guide is an annex of the State Emergency Welfare Plan to provide the necessary framework to facilitate the activation and operation of a Disaster Information Support and Care Centre.

4. Purpose

The DISCC is a temporary location/facility, where various forms of support will be offered and may require the provision of a wide range of services. The DISCC is where bereaved families and friends can receive information, appropriate support, care and advice, in an environment specifically designed for this purpose – a secure facility with privacy and comfort, with support from agencies present at the DISCC.

The DISCC should not be confused with other facilities which appear in emergency planning, for example Welfare Centres. Welfare centres are a venue that may provide emergency welfare services for evacuation, reception, accommodation and relief and recovery (commonly referred to as a 'one-stop-shop') for an impacted community.

The main purpose of the DISCC is to enable the timely exchange of accurate information and provision of services between families, relatives, friends and essential emergency service agencies, with particular focus on critical mass casualty and Disaster Victim Identification processes.

The DISCC will:

- 4.1 Provide a secure and confidential environment, with assurance of physical safety and free from external intrusion;
- 4.2 enable families and friends to gain as much information as is currently available about those affected by the emergency;
- 4.3 offer access to a range of resources and information that will allow families and friends to make informed choices and direction about the services and supports for their needs;
- 4.4 ensure a seamless multi-agency approach to provide support without duplication of effort;
- 4.5 assist responders in ensuring that bereaved families and friends receive professional advice and assistance which is co-ordinated, consistent and clear; meets individuals' needs; and is offered in a sensitive, compassionate and private manner.

5. Activation of the DISCC

The DISCC will be activated on advice from the CPFS State Welfare Coordinator, to provide services as soon as possible after an event when such a service is deemed appropriate, in accordance with the State Emergency Welfare Plan and as outlined in this guide.

The State Welfare Coordinator, in consultation with the HMA/Controlling Agency and WA Police, having considered the potential scale of the incident, will determine the need for the DISCC and issue such instructions to establish the DISCC.

The DISCC should only be opened once sufficient staff and equipment to fulfil its designated functions are in place.

The DISCC Coordinator will be appointed by the State Welfare Coordinator to undertake operational management of the facility. The Coordinator will have a similar

role as a Welfare Coordinator, however needs to have skills in coordinating a multi-agency facility providing complex, sensitive services.

CPFS will lead in establishing the DISCC, with participating agencies expected to supply support staff as requested by the State Welfare Coordinator and DISCC Coordinator. This will be done in consultation with the WA Police.

6. Choice of premises

The task of identifying a suitable site for the DISCC, and the decision of which site to use, will be made by the HMA/Controlling Agency, in consultation with the State Welfare Coordinator and WA Police.

In deciding the location for the DISCC the following needs to be considered:

- 6.1 the rapid and appropriate identification of a trained DISCC Coordinator and trained CPFS staff and partnering agencies' staff and volunteers.
- 6.2 the establishment of the Disaster Information Support and Care Centre Advisory Group (DISCCAG), with representatives of key agencies as determined by the State Welfare Coordinator and DISCC Coordinator;
- 6.3 a large, secure, preferably secluded facility, which can cancel its activities and bookings, both short and long-term, and has sufficient floor space to support multiple functions;
- 6.4 the availability of effective communications capability, including secure electronic equipment;
- 6.5 any impact on the local community;
- 6.6 all known threats, risks and hazards relative to the chosen facility, including Occupational, Health and Safety considerations;
- 6.7 the availability of access for people with disabilities, including parking;
- 6.8 the availability of public transportation and public parking;
- 6.9 the availability of logistical requirements for physical equipment, including, desks, office chairs, lounge chairs, coffee tables, portable wall partitioning, path roping, lighting, photocopiers, fax machines, telephones, etc.

See Appendix 1 - Checklist for Additional Practical Considerations - dependent on the location and likely duration of the DISCC being operational.

7. Setting up the DISCC

The DISCC will only be opened when it is sufficiently staffed and equipped to fulfil its designated function. Effective communication with families and the public will be part of the initial strategy to provide clear and accurate information from the outset. The Hazard Management Agency will provide this information to the DISCC Coordinator and WA Police – see 13. Communications below.

8. Layout of the DISCC

A suggested floor plan of the layout of the DISCC is provided in Appendix 2. This plan identifies the various areas which are set aside for each specific purpose. The floor plan gives consideration to:

- 8.1 a waiting area with light refreshments – tea, coffee, cold drinks facilities;
- 8.2 a registration and reception area to record details of all those attending the DISCC
- 8.3 an area where families may be taken for confidential interviews (sound proof if possible);
- 8.4 areas which enable the provision of personal support services, including practical resources such as phone cards, and counselling;
- 8.5 a child safe and supervised area;
- 8.6 quiet areas where family members are able to go for private time;
- 8.7 adequate restroom facilities;
- 8.8 food and refreshment preparation areas (commercial kitchen if possible) and serving areas;
- 8.9 a First Aid station;
- 8.10 general telephone and internet access points;
- 8.11 Staff Only Area, including separate refreshment area if possible
- 8.12 Administration/Management Office
- 8.13 Briefing area for
 - Staff
 - Dignitaries, Politicians

In addition consideration should be given to designated areas for each agency working within the DISCC.

9. Security of the DISCC

It is imperative the DISCC facility provides a secure and confidential environment, a “safe space”, where those affected could be assured of their own physical safety and free from external intrusion. The need for security measures to assist with this will be determined by the HMA/Controlling Agency, in consultation with WA Police and the State Welfare Coordinator on a case by case basis.

10. Staffing the DISCC

The DISCC will be staffed by CPFS staff and partnering agencies staff and volunteers. See Appendix 3 – Disaster Information Support and Care Centre Structure.

The DISCC Coordinator, CPFS staff and partnering agencies staff and volunteers need to be pre-identified and trained and skilled to provide specific welfare support services in the DISCC environment, appreciating the highly sensitive and complex services required.

11. Agencies' Participating in the DISCC and their Roles

The following is a list of those agencies that may be considered for inclusion in the DISCC. Others may be co-opted as required:

| Agency | Role |
|--|--|
| HMA/Controlling Agency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has overall responsibility for managing the response to an emergency. • Provides information regarding the incident • May provide community liaison officers to assist at the DISCC |
| WA Police | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the lead agency for DVI • Has responsibility for media liaison regarding DVI information on behalf of the HMA/Controlling Agency. • Gather information for DVI • Ante-mortem • Provide updates and information to the DISCC Coordinator, relatives and friends • Notification of deceased persons to next of kin |
| Department for Child Protection and Family Support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activation, establish and Coordination of the DISCC • Welfare Services as outlined within the State Emergency Welfare Plan |
| Australian Red Cross | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration of inquiries and matching to disaster victims • Personal Support |
| Youthcare | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Support |
| Save the Children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crèche/childcare |
| St John Ambulance Or Department of Health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide First Aid |
| Salvation Army | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catering • Personal Support |
| Country Women's Association | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catering • Personal Support |
| Coroner's Office | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and liaison |

| | |
|---|---|
| Australian Government Department of Human Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International liaison and information |
| Australian Government Department of Human Services Centrelink | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial advice and assistance |
| Other relevant partnering agencies | As agreed |
| | |

The State Welfare Coordinator will be responsible for activation of individual support agencies as required or requested by the DISCC Coordinator.

12. Management of the DISCC

12.1. The DISCC Coordinator will be appointed to:

- **Role**
 - Facilitate operational management of the DISCC.
- **Responsibilities**
 - Chair regular DISCCAG meetings;
 - Liaise with the HMA/Controlling Agency and WA Police regarding media strategies.
 - Brief DISCC staff and clients regularly;
 - Establish the DISCC management structure and information flow processes, including an information point;
 - Coordinate roles and responsibilities of partnering agencies;
 - Coordinate welfare services and activities in the DISCC;
 - Liaise with the welfare services Team Leaders.
 - Establish recording of DISCC client statistics and management information processes, including financial processes and storage of documents.
 - Develop a DISCC evaluation strategy for partnering agencies and DISCC clients, if appropriate.

12.2. Each agency will:

- **Roles**
 - As per table above
- **Responsibilities**
 - Appoint a Liaison Officer to the DISCCAG;
 - Ensure understanding of the purpose of the DISCC, services being provided and knowledge of the layout of the building;
 - Manage and provide administrative support for their own teams and organising their own rosters.

12.3. The DISCCAG will meet twice daily to consider the following:

- the provision of Triage and Assessment of Needs of the families and friends using the DISCC;
- the provision of Daily Bulletins with up to date information for the benefit of agencies working within the centre and other interested parties;
- the provision of public information;

- maintaining links with the HMA/Controlling Agency and WA Police, Hospitals, Mortuary and other key stakeholders;
- the management of the communication strategies and media coverage;
- the management of VIP visits;
- transition to a Recovery Centre where appropriate;
- at the earliest possible stage the need for the DISCCAG to develop an exit strategy/decommissioning of the DISCC.
- Evaluation of the DISCC services by partnering agencies and clients, if appropriate.

Administrative support for the DISCCAG will be provided by CPFS.

13. Communication

The DISCC must be able to perform with minimum of media intrusion with the privacy of families and friends being of paramount importance. To achieve this, the DISCC Coordinator will establish a media strategy for the DISCC on behalf of the HMA/Controlling Agency and in consultation with WA Police to ensure family members and friends are not caused further alarm or distress.

Effective communication with families and the public will be part of the initial strategy to provide clear and accurate information from the outset. The HMA/Controlling Agency will provide this information to the DISCC Coordinator and WA Police.

All agencies, including the HMA/Controlling Agency, will be asked not to use the DISCC as a point of media interviews.

14. Special Considerations

The DISCC Coordinator and DISCCAG need to identify any special considerations for culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD), Vulnerable and Special Needs groups using the DISCC, and seek out appropriate agencies to consult with. Specific requirements may be culturally appropriate foods being provided; an area set up as a multi-denominational prayer room, interpreters and separated areas if required. The HMA/Controlling Agency may also consider provision of a community liaison function to assist in this area.

15. DISCC Opening Hours

In the initial stage it may be appropriate for the DISCC to open 24 hours a day and the operation may be scaled down to day-time hours as determined by the State Welfare Coordinator, DISCC Coordinator and DISCCAG.

16. Financial Arrangements for the DISCC

As per the State Emergency Welfare Plan 3.8 Financial arrangements for activation of this guide will be as outlined in in State EM Policy Section 5.12 and State EM Plan Section 5.4, unless other arrangements are negotiated and approved by the State

Welfare Coordinator. All expenditure under this guide must be approved by the State Welfare Coordinator or the Emergency Services Coordinator, and a separate financial management system will be established for the DISCC.

17. DISCC Stand Down/Exit Strategy

Stand Down and decommissioning of the DISCC is to occur as per the State Emergency Welfare Plan 3.3.3 Stage 3 – Stand Down. Welfare support services may continue beyond this time at the discretion of the State Welfare Coordinator. Ongoing services will be monitored by the CPFS Emergency Services Coordinator, and participating agencies will be responsible for submitting ongoing and debrief reports to the Emergency Services Coordinator.

See Appendix 5 Checklist for DISCC Stand Down/Exit Strategy.

Appendix 1 - Checklist for Additional Practical Considerations - dependent on the location and likely duration of the DISCC being operational¹

Identify if existing services and supplies of the facility can be engaged for catering, cleaning, personal support and administrative items (tissues, pens, paper etc).

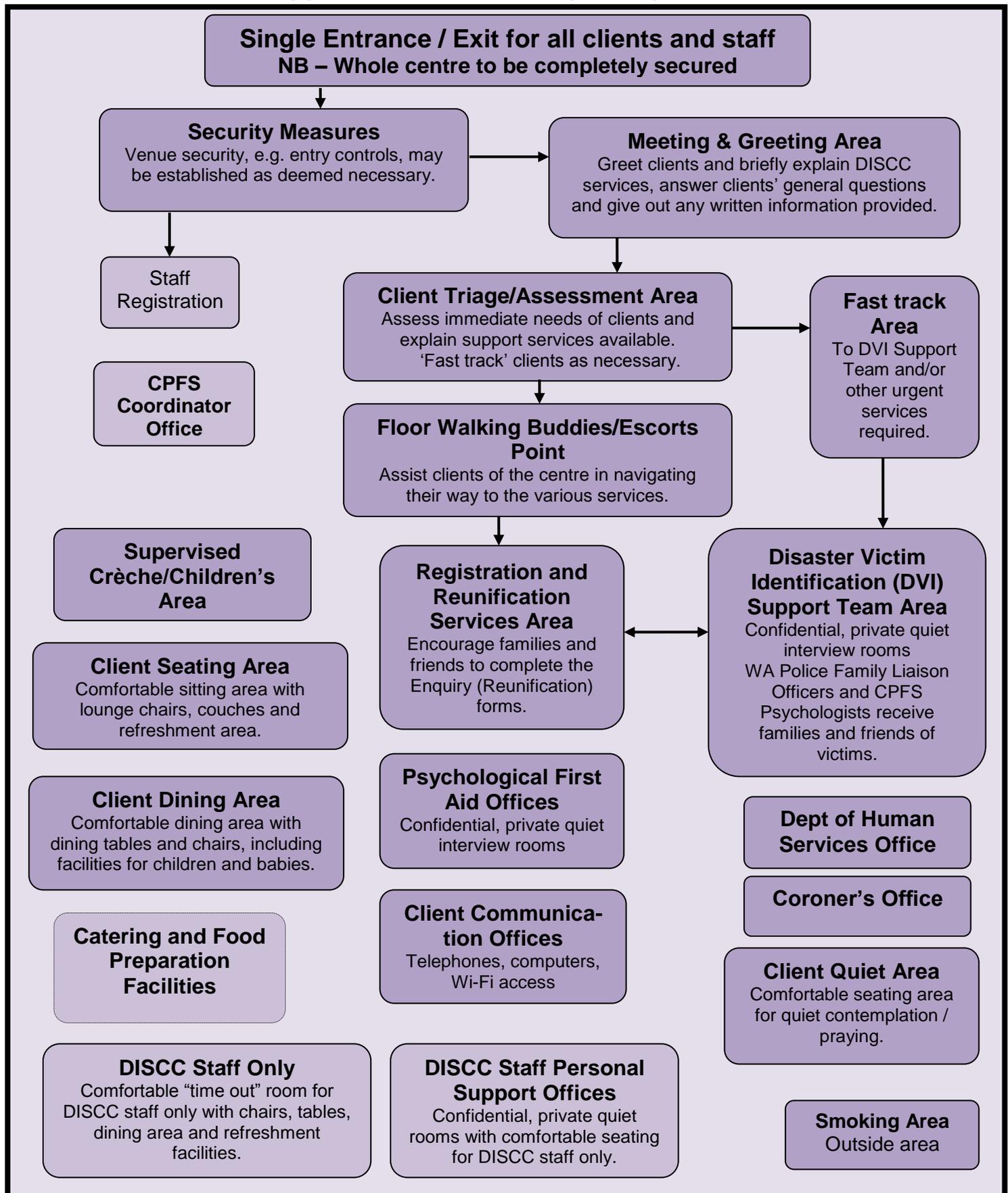
If this is not possible CPFS will need to identify and engage such services.

If logistical requirements for physical equipment such as furniture are not available at the facility this could be outsourced to a hire company.

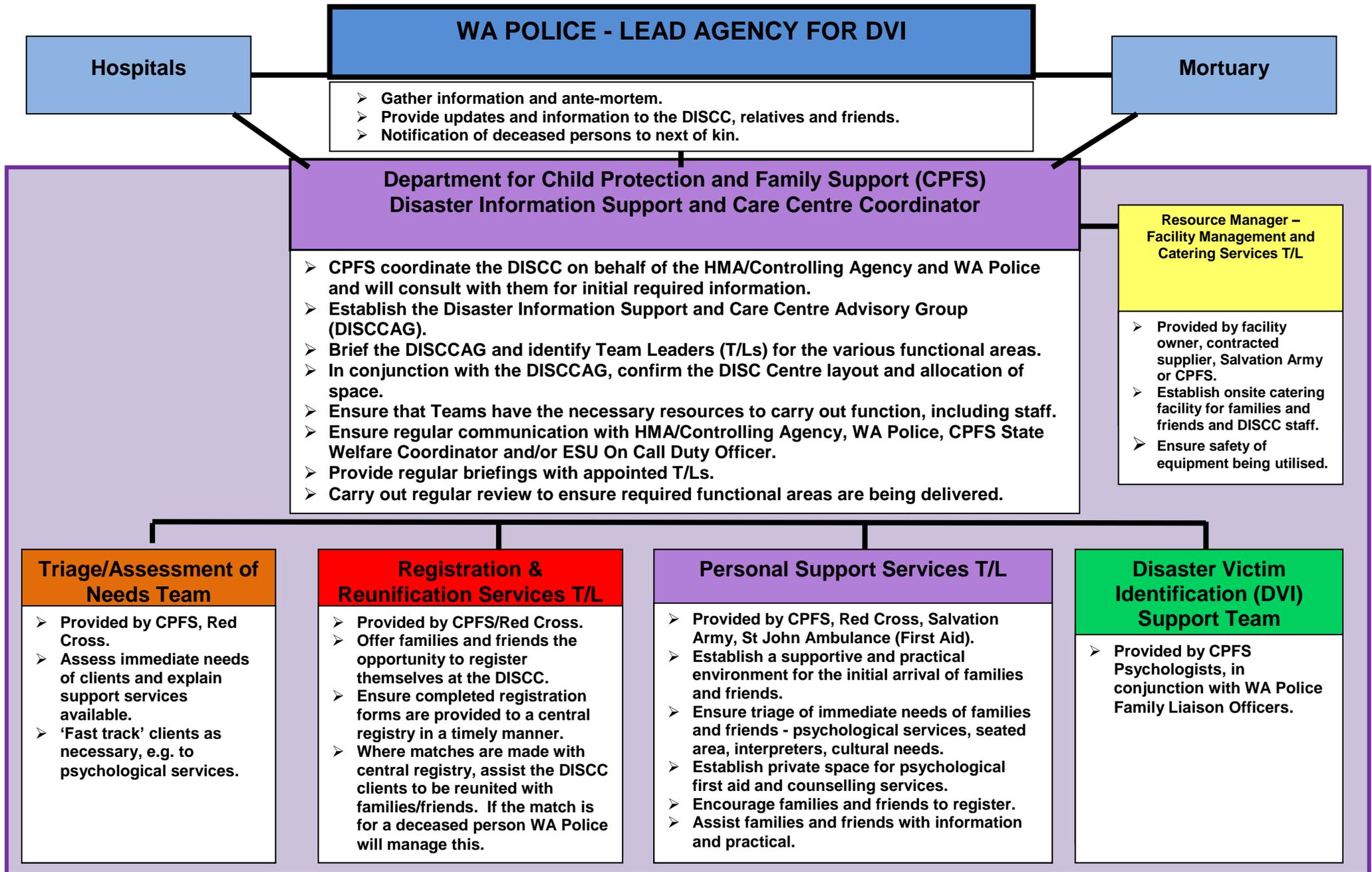
- car parking
- disabled access
- contact details of key organisations (support services)
- diverse catering services, including special dietary and/or cultural needs
- computers with secure communications for all relevant agencies
- landline telephones
- printers, photocopiers, fax machines, paper and toner
- power extensions where required
- good quality flooring throughout the facility
- sound-proofing private areas
- furniture requirements, including desks, office chairs, lounge chairs, portable wall partitioning, notice boards, rubbish bins, etc.
- Adequate lighting
- adequate toilet facilities, including disabled toilets
- appropriate signage; Signs - Entry, Exit Only, No entry, Staff Only, Meeting Room 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 etc, and path roping
- secure storage of data and documentation
- storage of standby materials
- fans, air conditioning and heaters
- confidential waste and collection
- personal waste collection
- rubbish collection
- secure storage of data and documentation
- regular cleaning of the facility
- crèche facilities
- emergency access
- fire safety equipment, fire alarms and signage
- risk register
- accident report book
-

¹Nottingham and Nottinghamshire LRF Humanitarian Assistance Centre Plan March 2011, page 58

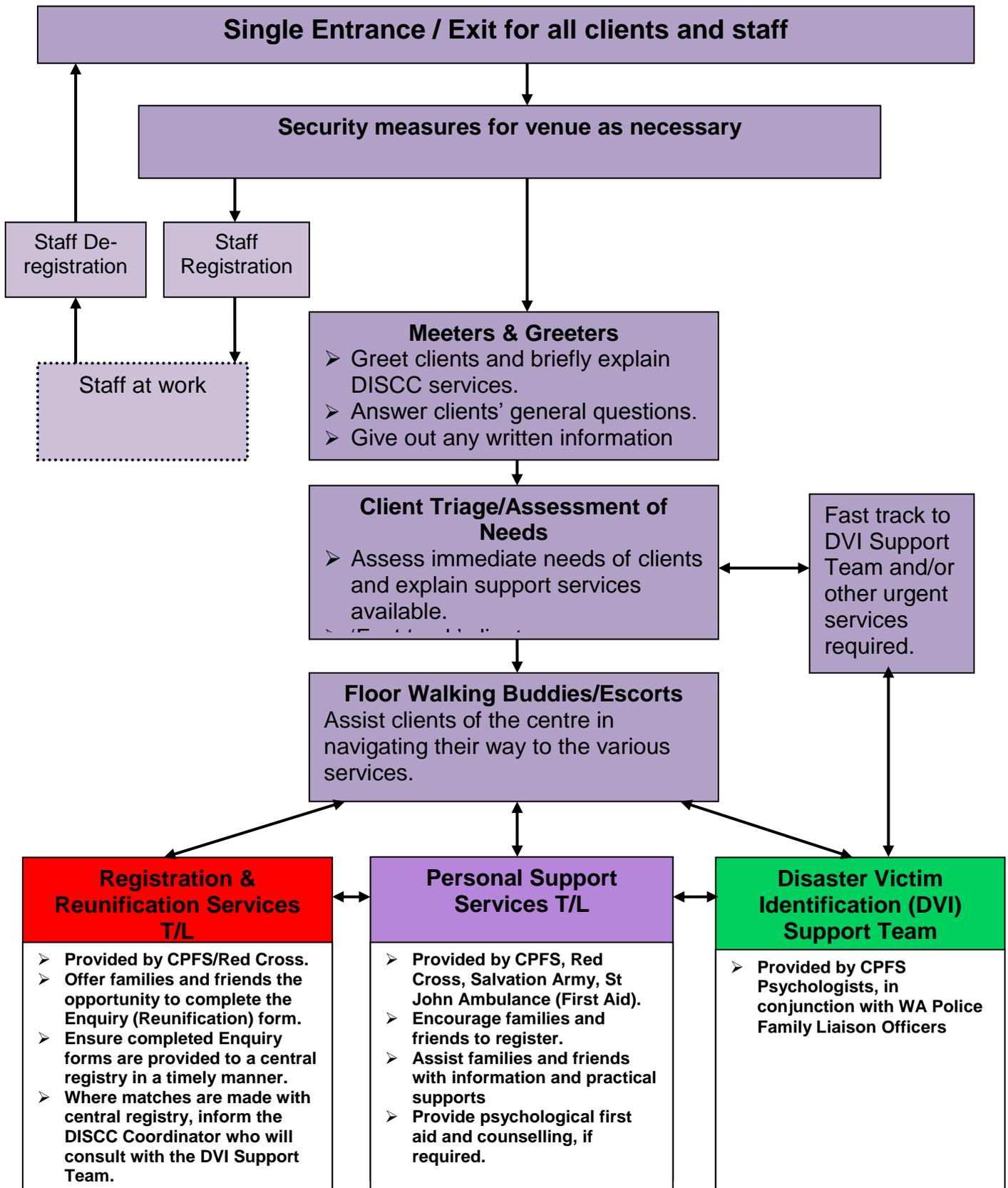
Appendix 2 – Suggested Floor Plan for the Disaster Information Support and Care Centre (DISCC)



Appendix 3 – The Disaster Information Support and Care Centre (DISCC) Structure



Appendix 4 – Disaster Information Support and Care Centre (DISCC) Client Flow Chart²



² Nottingham and Nottinghamshire LRF Humanitarian Assistance Centre Plan, March 2011, page 77

Appendix 5 - Checklist for DISCC Stand Down/Exit Strategy

- Assess the need for the centre to continue – have the objectives been reached?
- Establish a media and public information strategy for closing the DISCC.
- Set a date for the centre to close.
- Develop strategies for the closure of the centre with realistic time frames.
- Consider levels of staffing required.
- Consider resources required.
- Consider cost implications.
- Establish an exit strategy with the facility owners/managers, including cleaning of the premises, making good any repairs needed and returning the facility to its original use.
- Establish an exit strategy for the DISCC clients.
- Ensure storage of DISCC documents and agreed access to these in the future.
- Ensure financial arrangements and payment of accounts are finalised.
- Final debriefs of:
 - What worked well?
 - What needed improving?
 - Lessons learnt?
- Writing and completing the Post Operations Report.
- Writing of Thank you letters to facility owners, partnering agencies, suppliers and other agencies that provided services.