

BRIGHT START PORT PIRIE AND PETERBOROUGH, SA

The project setting

The Bright Start project, based in South Australia in Port Pirie and Peterborough, addresses the needs of parents with children aged 0-5 years of age.

In Port Pirie the Parenting Information Centre is situated in a community health centre that can be visited by individuals, families and children. The parenting centre attracts families and children with needs that are more than just acquiring parenting skills. A school holiday program with a difference was held in December – January, attracting a broad range of parents who attended with their children. The activities enjoyed by all were no cost parent-child activities and preparing low cost nutritious meals. Seeds were sown, a children's garden planted and musical instruments and story books were made. Workers from several partnership agencies including Centrelink, Child & Youth Health, Occupational Therapists and Family Day Care joined a facilitation team to present the program.

A calendar has been developed promoting activities and learning opportunities for parents throughout the region. The calendar allows the Bright Start Reference Group to identify gaps in services to be addressed as well as take into account how often these programs are provided. The calendar project will also enable certain parenting programs to be run collaboratively with other agencies.

An Aboriginal Parenting Project Officer has been employed 0.5 to support indigenous families and work in partnership with the Aboriginal Education Workers in local Primary Schools. A weekly Parenting Support Group has been formed, meeting at the Aboriginal Community centre, and a small drop in centre has been established at Solomontown Primary School for indigenous parents. Their role is to support parents access community resources and services, address gaps and needs in parenting information and skills, and to engage parents, through positive programs, into the schools and community.

In Peterborough the Parenting Information Centre is situated at the Peterborough Primary School and whilst the project has been very successful in engaging parents of young children through weekly groups in Peterborough and Terowie, there has been very little use of the Parenting Information Centre. The materialisation of a plan to re-locate the Kindergarten to the Primary School campus has not occurred, and the Reference Group and staff consider the location is not working in the best interest of the project, and a main street venue is actively being sought.

In Peterborough the Parent Activities Group meets every Thursday to enjoy each others company, participate in a host of activities ranging from crafts to parenting skills such as enjoying your baby and the importance of play in children's development. Children come in with their parents where

communities of Port Pirie and Peterborough and simultaneously helps other agencies and service providers to work collaboratively to address the needs of parents.

Many people in Port Pirie and Peterborough have low incomes and don't have a car and this can lead to social isolation. In addition many people have said they don't have many family or friends. Attending programs gives them a chance to meet other parents in the same situation. Many clients have limited education and completing a training workshop on parenting can provide them with a sense of accomplishment.

Attending courses, workshops, information sessions and groups can provide the basis of social networks and education normalises the challenges of parenting.

The Bright Start team and supporting agencies work with parents educate,



Stakeholders including workers, steering committee, FaCS and AIFS at the launch.

crèche facilities and a light lunch snack are provided. In addition, a "one-stop shop" is offered for parents with babies when a Child and Youth Health nurse visits Parent Activities Group every fortnight to provide baby weighing facilities and general advice to parents.

A similar group Parent Power operates every Monday in Terowie, a small town near Peterborough.

Reference groups meet in Port Pirie twice a month and in Peterborough monthly to guide the project.

Why is the project needed?

This project serves as a very important agent to address gaps in the

empower and enhance their positive parenting skills so that they can then pass these attributes on to the next generation. The more information parents have about how they "do" parenting the more choices they have. For example, if the only form of discipline the parent is aware of is "smacking" that is what they are likely to do.

What are you trying to do in this project?

The Bright Start Project Workers and partner agencies are providing appropriate relevant programs as well as conducting individual or group counselling sessions to parents to educate and empower them with positive parenting skills. We are also trying





to make this project sustainable by involving local community members as leaders or to transfer their skills and knowledge to others.

How are you going about it?

With guidance from the Port Pirie and Peterborough Reference Group members, the Bright Start Project workers are very much focused on following the objectives of the project to: improve partnerships between

service providers to more effectively respond to identified needs; provide opportunities for parents to access and influence service providers; enable parents to enhance their parenting skills and family relationships; promote safe and healthy development of children; improve community responsiveness to the needs of families and children; and work with aboriginal families to enhance parenting skills.

CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY, VICTORIA

The project setting

Connecting the Community is a community development project focusing on strengthening families and community building in Clayton South. The community of Clayton South (in Melbourne) is characterised by great cultural diversity with more than 50 nationalities represented and less than 40 per cent of residents being born in Australia.

The lead agency for the project is the City of Kingston, Community Services. Other project partners include Southern Family Life who will provide family support services, including case management, in-home family support and group work; and the Centre for Community Child Health who will assist the project evaluation.

Why is the project needed?

Need for the project was primarily identified through community feedback, which was supported by socio-demographic analysis. In early 2001, Council's Access and Equity Committee conducted a consultation in South Clayton community to identify the needs and concerns of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse families (Source: Report from the Kingston City Council's Access and Equity Committee February 2001). The project will build on this consultation with further input from the community.

The following sample of views typify how residents perceive their community at present:

"Women are very isolated as a result of traditional role differentiation and a tendency to become house-bound."

"The need for services to respond on an individual basis and enable a trusting one-to-one relationship to develop."

"Families tend only to present at times of crises – there is lots of scope for prevention work."

"You should limit information that is spread through the written word – there is a need to find other methods of communication to be effective."

"Some families will need a lot of practical assistance in accessing services – we shouldn't take anything for granted."

"Some families in the area will need education about parenting norms and laws – for example, child abuse. The message needs to be delivered in an educative context, not in a judgemental manner."

What are you trying to do in this project?

The project aims to connect families into a coordinated and responsive service system to improve family functioning and build a stronger and self-reliant community.

The objectives of the project are to:

- improve family health and functioning by building on existing services and developing a more comprehensive and inclusive network of service options with an early intervention focus;

- actively engage the community in the planning, development and evaluation of the project;
- improve coordination and linkages between services to ensure continuity of care, responsiveness to individual needs and cost effectiveness outcomes;
- maximise local leadership and partnership opportunities through building structured links between the local community, service providers, government and non-government stakeholders;
- support the community to build capacity to address social risk factors and create a more supportive and safer environment for families and children; and
- build on existing knowledge and through action research develop new insights into best practice approaches to service delivery and capacity building.

How are you going about it?

The establishment stage of the project has been completed which has included communication and promotional strategies; community engagement for consultation and volunteer involvement in the project; development of the local service system, including new services to the area through outposting and community and professional network groups formed; and a ranges of supports provided to individual families and local community groups. Stage two is set to begin where a range of specific projects will be implemented in conjunction with the community in response to issues identified during consultation processes.