
CREATING CAPABLE COMMUNITIES (CCC), SOUTHERN FAMILY LIFE, MELBOURNE, VIC

What has the project been doing since its last Bulletin report?

The project has continued to build on and consolidate some of its previous activities and initiatives. This allows for us to try some new things, take up the opportunity to look at previous challenges and try different ways to address them. It also allows for continuity and a sense of safety and familiarity for families who are participating.

An example of this is through our long-standing and consistent weekly Homework Club. We now have a core group of parents attending this who feel comfortable to take on particular roles, both practical and supportive. One of the Dads of the participating families has agreed to maintain a presence at the weekly sessions as a result of adolescent boys turning up unannounced and causing disruption. This has been supportive of all parents and children in creating a sense of safety for the group. Although the consistent turn-up of a core group of parents is positive, the next challenge for us is to consider how we may

attract families beyond this core group. We are hoping that setting up a regular time separate to the Homework Club for parents to talk and raise issues or ideas will be a springboard for this.

What has been learned since the last report that may be of interest and value to other developing projects?

These issues have brought home strongly the critical factor in working effectively with families and communities. Our first base is in being able to critique our own work practice and delivery and how this becomes a demonstration model for the ideals



we aim for in building a sense of community. These are the things which are easy to say and harder to do – being transparent and honest with people, working collaboratively, stating our common goals and reminding ourselves of them along the way, building new partnerships and keeping communication open and meaningful. If we get it as right as we can at first base, it will be evident in our work and in our outcomes.

How has the community responded to the project so far?

Meanwhile, we must be getting some if it right! Families from the Neighbourhood Estates continue to access our ongoing Homework Club which has had increasing numbers over time. Residents are involved in a recently convened Community Care Group which seeks to give voice to common concerns and explore possible solutions. Residents are also involved in helping to set up and run some programs from our new community facility to be up and running shortly. There have been some in-roads made in offering support to parents with young infants and a new program through our service will allow for the engagement of such families in more intensive support but with complementary outcomes. That is, the focus of community participation in strengthening family relationships.

These later initiatives are those which will carry outcomes well beyond the project's dollar provision and into the ongoing reality of people's lives.

FURTHER UPDATE

In a third round of questions projects were asked about their development particularly in relation to the use of action research in their work. Two projects report.

YOUNG FAMILIES SUPPORT SERVICE, TOWNSVILLE, QLD

What has the project been doing since its last report?

The project has continued to provide a high level of intensive individual assistance in the past six months with referrals reaching maximum capacity at one stage.

YFSS has continued to run the Preparation for Parenthood (antenatal) Program and the Young Parents Group with the development of two new one-off/trial groups. These two new groups were a "parenting skills for toddlers" and an "anxiety group".

A focus group on young parents wanting to re-enter the workforce was held looking at the issues that young people face, with the idea of developing a skill/information based program to assist people in this area. We have had our biyearly reference group meeting, and participated in AIFS parenting education research and our own data collection.

How has the project incorporated Action Research into its work?

Whenever groups are run such as antenatal, young parents, anxiety and toddlers groups there are always elements of action research. There is a standard evaluation processes such as questionnaires and we are always listening to and collecting verbal feedback. From listening to our customers the service has run a focus group and changed elements of our group sessions. When a participant comes to the end of their intervention they are provided an evaluation/exit questionnaire and/or an

exit interview. A Reference group that meets biyearly.

YFSS is constantly changing service delivery due to demand, customer feedback, current trends or issues. This has been evident in the remodelling and streamlining of our service as well as the development of new groups such as anxiety and parenting toddlers. Data is also collected about participants and the community agencies accessed.

How is the project recording its processes and learning (including but not only action research)

- Evaluation forms from groups
- Report writing
- Individual and a community database
- Re-structure of service delivery/intake and writing about the process
- Writing in a comments book (feedback from young people and other workers)
- Conducting a focus group
- Reference group and minutes
- Gathering participants stories
- 6 monthly report

What has been learned in the last six months that may be of interest and value to other projects?

A review of service delivery occurred when the service reached full client capacity, case management, group and research requirements. Due to this a brainstorming session was held to restructure the service delivery and prioritize the intake process. The service has now become more streamlined.

Social interaction is one of the key issues for young people and is a large reason why groups are so successful in this project. Accommodation and transport are still the biggest barriers for our participants.

