

MACARTHUR CHILD & FAMILY INTERAGENCY MINUTES

CONSULTATION DATA SUMMARY FROM AUGUST MACARTHUR CHILD & FAMILY INTERAGENCY

What is working well

- Supported playgroups are working to connect families and the need for these continues:
 - Existing unsupported playgroups – quality has been a big issue and merging supported playgroup members into these unsupported ones has not been happening.
 - For playgroups to move on from fully supported to unsupported or semi-independent there would need to be varied levels of playgroups running parallel including very localised (suburb level) options.
 - Lots of constraints to evolving supported playgroups into semi-independent of unsupported playgroups including lack of venues, insurance issues, costs and equipment, willingness and skill of parents to run them
 - There are waiting lists for supported playgroups and the playgroups can be large. Discussion concluded that playgroups should have size and ratio of 1-2 workers to 10 families. Families tend to move on from playgroup to childcare services.
 - Initial membership of supported playgroups and establishing a well matched group that is likely to work well is challenging but important
 - One Wollondilly playgroup is struggling for numbers and leadership. Playgroup is working as an early learning model.
 - Wollondilly and Wingecarribee are particularly challenged regarding venues.
- Health new mums groups are working well
- Support for Aboriginal families for up to 2 years e.g. Parents as Teachers also works
- Aboriginal playgroup has become a focal point for linking to a range of services
- Partnerships are working well between agencies e.g. running parenting courses
- Perinatal reporting process works reasonably well
- Young Parents project with the wrap around components works well for that target group
- STEPS – vision screening which targets all preschools is comprehensive for those it reaches but those not using early childhood services such as Aboriginal families are slipping through. Some of these are captured in first year of school
- Campbelltown Family Support Service mix of home visiting, case management and groups works well:
 - The mixed mode and flexibility is an important feature for families.

- Discussion indicated this service is not reaching families in Wollondilly as much as they would like. Barriers suggested by the consultation group include Wollondilly families knowing about the service, transport issues, possibly the service name and families preferring a localised service
- Brighter Futures is experiencing similar issues as well as referral pathway issues in Wollondilly. Barriers also around community views on “help seeking”
- Need ways to effectively reach Wollondilly community with information
- The flexibility and responsiveness of the FNSW program is seen as important for meeting changing needs
- Supporting the networks and partnerships is important for success of FNSW

Those not faring so well

- Families where parent has drug and alcohol issues and families in the space between Brighter Futures and the child protection system are not getting needs met so well.
- Aboriginal families and CALD families at the early intervention level, with significant vulnerabilities but not yet in the child protection system end up on waiting lists and not getting service
- Families living in Macquarie Fields social housing estates not accessing health services
- Children in families who are not accessing health early intervention services are not getting early identification of disabilities – not identified till much later. Also not getting access to financial supports such as the \$12000 for support of children with autism
- Meeting needs across very diverse communities in Macarthur area with very different needs e.g. difference between Wollondilly and Macquarie Fields. There is a thin density of vulnerable families in some communities and these families tend to miss out on supports

What could work/ is needed to improve outcomes for families

- Matching membership of new mums’ health groups with a view to potential ongoing support networks forming. Good matching is vital and very effective as early intervention where it happens. Well matched groups (with a unifying feature e.g. similar demographics; people with learning difficulties) – allows them to go to try other services in pairs
- Workers remaining well informed at ground level is important:
 - Email links
 - Interagencies with some structured input time as well as information sharing
 - Evidence based practice information sites/discussions and reflective practice discussions

Top priority

- Access to funding, time and staffing resources
- Supports for children in middle childhood (5-8) who have been exposed to experiences that place them at risk of future difficulty or disengagement with education
- The most vulnerable families are still not getting what is needed
- Service access for working parents, those not around during the day
- Resolving issues of boundaries of government services being incompatible and impacting upon services on the ground – particularly in Wollondilly and Wingecarribee
- Venues and infrastructure in some areas
- Supported playgroups:
 - demand continues to exceed supply
 - challenges integrating CALD families into general playgroups.