

CHILDREN COMMUNITIES CONNECTIONS CONFERENCE
 UniSA Mawson Lakes Campus November 2008
 www.salisburyc4c.org.au

Social Inclusion and multicultural competence in integrated service delivery

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1: The importance of the early years

Yesterday's talk

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It is possible to break the cycles of disadvantage

- High/Scope Perry Preschool Programme
- Chicago Parent-Child Centres
- Elmira Prenatal/Early Infancy Programme

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Voluntary, high quality, publicly funded universal pre-kindergarten programme for 3-4 year olds in America

- Cost \$6300 per child for 7 million children
- Annual benefits outstrip costs in 9 years
- By 2050 annual benefits \$779 billion - \$191 billion in government budget benefits, \$432 billion in increased compensation of workers, \$156 billion in reduced costs to individuals from less crime and child abuse. By 2050 benefits exceed costs by 8.2 to 1 (Lynch 2007)

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Heckman (2006)

Figure 7
 Rates of return to human capital investment initially setting investment to be equal across all ages

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2: Multiple systems impact on children's outcomes

Bronfenbrenner's framework

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Parents

- Parent stress
- Parenting style
- Parent-child relationships

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Community

- Social capital differences = social cohesion + social inclusion + participation
- Increased social capital → better mental (eg less behaviour problems) and physical (eg lower body mass index) health, quality of life, more able to take advantage of social capital outside the home (eg school)

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Living in low SES neighbourhood

- → poorer physical functioning
 - Less social integration
 - Greater family financial problems
- But moving to higher SES neighbourhood does not redress the differences
- In addition, there are variations in how families respond to disadvantage

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Racism and social exclusion

- Discriminatory attitudes → behaviours → children demonstrating poorer school performance
- But
- This can be buffered by strong ethnic/cultural affiliation
 - Witnessing community violence → increase behaviour problems

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3: We need multiple strategies to improve outcomes

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3a: Programmes for individuals

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Improve children's ability to withstand risk

- Positive self efficacy / self esteem
- Learned through experiencing success
- Poor health → emotional and behavioural problems
- Teach children skills to improve performance

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3b: Programmes for parents

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Parent and family support

- Social support
- Parent education (eg behaviour management, relationships)
- Playgroups
- Home visiting
- Providing information and resources

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3c: Programmes for communities

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Building social capital


- Informal community activities
- Formal groups
- Employee volunteer programmes
- Role of government? Are some communities so socially disadvantaged that the state must take a role?

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Community resources

- Safe outdoor play areas
- Places for parents to meet informally
- Public library
- Toy library
- Facilities to run formal community activities
- Facilities for youth eg skateboard ramp
- transport

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- Community services need to work together for transition planning
 - Places where people can work
 - Family friendly work practices (employer sponsored child care, flexible working options, phone-in lines, parental leave, job sharing, working from home)
 - Working poor
 - income support

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4: Putting it all together

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Service development and delivery needs to be ecological

- Difficulty of one service doing everything
- So
- Collaborate / work in partnership with other services
- Wrap-around or joined-up services
- Eg Sure Start UK – local agencies work in partnership to receive funding – families experience integrated services

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MACS

- Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services
- Holistic approach to service delivery
- Child care, outside school hours care, parent support, nutrition, counselling, cultural awareness, transport, referrals


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Schools

- Already a focal point so use them
- Care for all ages of children, family education and support, adult education, health services, space for occasional clinics

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- Canadian Early Child Development and Parenting Centres
 - Families NSW
 - Queensland Early Years Strategy
 - Rudd 2020 Parent Child Centres (Child & Family Centres)

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Collaborative partnerships happen with co-location

- Eg different agencies renting space in the same building OR
- Agencies working more closely, sharing physical resources and infrastructure OR
- Creating multidisciplinary teams who work together to create seamless service delivery

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My vision

Combine a range of options RELEVANT to each local community

List A: Child-centred programmes

- Long day care
- Family day care
- Outside school hours care
- Vacation care
- Occasional care
- Playgroup

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List B: Family Support/Community Development Programmes

- Drop-in centre
- Preschool/transition to school programmes
- Parent education programmes
- Child health programmes
- Nutritional programmes
- Prenatal programmes
- Base for home visiting/family support programmes
- Family planning
- Inclusion support – CaLD, Indigenous and Disability

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Ethno-specific or multicultural programmes

- Toy library
- Supervised Access programmes
- Homework programmes
- Drug and alcohol programmes
- Family counseling
- Family violence programmes
- Financial counseling programmes
- Transport support (ie provision of transport to enable families to get to the PCC)

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5: Principles underpinning service delivery

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Ecological perspective

We MUST Address disadvantage at child, family, community and societal levels

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Empowerment

Support children, families and communities to

- Make their own decisions
- Set their own goals

Workers guide and scaffold

The aim is for workers to not be needed any more

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Strengths-based approach

- ALL individuals, families, communities have strengths
- Learning works best when it grows from existing knowledge and skills
- Learning works best when people feel proud of who they are and what they have achieved so far – when they feel confident they CAN learn and that they have something to offer

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Cultural competency

- Workers must know a little about the range of cultural groups in THEIR local community and be open to the potential for misunderstandings
- Listen to more than words
- Try to create a shared understanding with each individual / family
- Learn to pronounce names and ask families to teach you some key words

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Remember

- Working this way takes time
- There is no ONE right programme that will 'fix' anything
- High quality is about relationship building – relationships with individuals, families and the community in which you work
- Quality is not WHAT you do but HOW you do it

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6: Conclusion

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What is your role

- What kinds of services will work for your children and families?
- What kinds of professionals should work in those services?
- How important does YOUR Government think young children are in your society?
- What will it take for them to put the resources you need into service development?

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You CAN make a difference

While one person can't move a mountain ... a well intentioned, well prepared group can build a mountain ... Though communication for social change they move mountains of apathy, mountains of hopelessness, mountains of cynicism ... buoyed by communication for social change principles and skill they can also build mountains of empowerment for those who have previously been voiceless or seemingly invisible (Grey Felder, 2002, p1, cited in Anonymous, 2006, p. 1)

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