

# Families NSW Annual Report

2010/11

## Justice and Human Services CEOs Forum

### *Overview*

Families NSW is the NSW Government's population based prevention and early intervention strategy for families expecting a baby or with children aged 0 to 8.

The strategy is implemented through evidence based service models that are focused on supporting parents to be confident, connected to their community and its services and equipped to support their children's development. These service models include health home visiting for mothers with a newborn; supported playgroups; family workers; Schools as Community Centres; volunteer home visiting and parenting programs.

This year marked the end of a three year planning cycle and the successful implementation of a number of long term commitments including the rebranding of Families First to Families NSW, the roll out of Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) across the state as well as implementation of Safe Start and Statewide Eyesight Preschooler Screening (StEPS).

As part of the Triple P roll out, 1,200 people from over 300 agencies and non-government organisations have now been trained as Triple P practitioners. Over 1800 Triple P seminars, groups and self-directed programs have been delivered to an estimated 8,000 families since the commencement of the Triple P roll out through Families NSW.

Families NSW is underpinned by a strong body of evidence on the importance of the early years and partner agencies continue to develop the evidence base through the evaluation of service models and refinement of data collection processes. In 2010 Family and Community Services, Community Services developed a number of tools as part of the Department's funding reform process to assist service providers to collect data for performance monitoring and evaluation. The data collection tool will collect both output and outcome data to assess the effectiveness of each funded project and contribute to evaluation of the Strategy. In the past, Families NSW evaluation activity has focussed heavily on processes because of a lack of performance monitoring data. The data collection tools will enable future evaluation activity to focus more on the outcomes, as we now have a clearer understanding of the process aspect of Families NSW funded projects.

A key focus for Families NSW in 2011/12 will be on integration and coordination of services. This is particularly important given the number of Commonwealth and State early childhood development initiatives available to parents and the potential for duplication. A Commonwealth/State action plan has been developed to support the implementation of the Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership Agreement and to identify how best to achieve local integration and co-ordination of services.

Integration of services present challenges for a service system focussed on individual program outputs and outcomes. In reality integration is difficult to achieve and requires a genuine multi-agency commitment from government across all portfolio

levels. Families NSW partner agencies will continue to work with State and Commonwealth agencies at a state and regional level to achieve shared and coordinated planning.

## **Key achievements 2010/11 Families NSW partner agencies:**

### **Family and Community Services Community Services**

- Successfully achieved the milestone of training 1,200 people as Triple P practitioners.
- Funded 337 supported playgroups across NSW providing opportunities for parents to share experiences of parenting and for children to socialise, play and learn in a structured and positive environment.
- Developed a web-based data collection tool to assist service providers to collect required data.

### **Family and Community Services Ageing Disability and Home Care**

- The first five-year phase of the Stronger Together initiative saw 29,000 new places created compared to the initial target of 18,100.
- Provided \$120,000 under the Early Intervention Coordination Program (EICCP) to support 15 Area Committee networking and local projects.
- A new Sibling Support Booklet was developed that focuses on providing support for siblings with disabilities.
- During 2010/11 Ageing, Disability and Home Care in partnership with Community Services provided additional funding to expand upon Parent Line improving the accessibility and services offered.

### **Department of Education and Communities**

- 48 Schools as Community Centres projects operated in public schools across NSW, with around 4,000 families with young children regularly participating in 895 initiatives over the year.
- Schools as Community Centres projects successfully supported parents to connect with other

families and services and supported increased parent confidence and knowledge of parenting and child development. Young children were provided with opportunities to participate in informal learning and to develop social and emotional skills supporting smoother transitions to school.

### **NSW Health**

- The most recent data shows that more than 87,000 families with a newborn were offered a Universal Health Home Visit (UHHV) by a child and family health nurse in the 2009/10 financial year
- 80% of families in NSW with a newborn were provided a UHHV by child and family health nurse in the 2009/10 financial year.
- Two additional sites for the Sustaining NSW Families (SNF) program were established, one at Arncliffe and the other at Lismore/Kyogle/Richmond Valley. This brings the total number of SNF sites in NSW to five
- More than 2,000 NSW Health employees successfully completed the SAFE START online training program.
- 94% of four year old children in NSW were offered the Statewide Eyesight Preschooler Screening (StEPS) program. Seven thousand children were identified with possible vision problems and referred to an eye health professionals for a diagnostic vision assessment and treatment, where applicable
- In early 2011, NSW Health funded dedicated tertiary Paediatric Ophthalmic Outpatients Clinic for children identified with possible vision problems and referred for further assessment via the StEPS program.
- A review of the 'Having a Baby' book commenced in 2011. It is anticipated that the new edition of the book will be available in early 2012.

## **Agency updates**

### **Family and Community Services Community Services**

In 2010/11, Families NSW funded 322 supported playgroups across NSW; 94 family worker projects; 10 volunteer home visiting projects; 49 community capacity building projects; 54 partnerships and networks projects; and 25 parenting programs, which includes providing support for Triple P and other projects which enhance parenting skills.

The Families NSW data collection system was established to capture data around three questions: 'How much did we do?'; 'How well did we do it?'; and 'Is anyone better off?' Apart from this data, other data collected includes some demographic information and the operation of the service as a system, for example, the number of referrals received and made. Community Services will also use this data to help inform a future evaluation of the program.

As the data collection tools are relatively new, the response rate of services was 80.4%. Based on this response, in 2010/11 data was recorded on 14,494<sup>1</sup> families representing approximately 25,500 children benefiting from the services<sup>2</sup>. Where recorded, 18% of parents and children identified as Aboriginal; 39% were first time parents; 7% of parents identified they had disabilities; 46% of families spoke another language at home (a proxy for CALD); 22% of families lived in rural or remote areas of NSW; 30% of families were affected by risk factors<sup>3</sup>; and 60% were affected by socio-economic disadvantage or social exclusion.

The available data on service user characteristics indicates that FNSW programs are engaging those families who are considered hard to reach, noting the particularly high proportion of Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse families. The strategy also appears to be engaging with families with significant vulnerabilities and socio-economic disadvantage.

Outcomes data was collected through surveys given to families in attendance of services. As this data is overly positive, Community Services is looking to refine the instruments and gauge data quality as more data becomes available. For example, 100% of families surveyed (231) and who completed a Parenting Program said they would recommend the program to a friend; 100% of families surveyed (1,602) and who attended a Supported Playgroup agreed or tended to agree with the statement: 'I am happy with the service I have received for myself and my family'.

A key commitment has been the roll out of Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) across the state. \$5.2M was allocated over 2007/08 – 2010/11 to the roll out the program with a further \$700K per annum recurrent funding. \$1.73M was allocated in 2010/11 to support the delivery of over 800 Triple P events and to train an additional 300 welfare, health and educational professionals in Triple P and a further 165 practitioners in Indigenous Triple P.

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<sup>1</sup> Families may be counted more than once if they attend multiple services.

<sup>2</sup> This excludes children who were in the family but not attending a Families NSW service. Children may also be counted more than once if they attend multiple services.

<sup>3</sup> Risk factors include mental health issues, family/domestic violence and drug and alcohol misuse.

With the target number of practitioners successfully trained, the emphasis of the roll-out of Triple P will shift from 'training' practitioners to 'supporting' them with the view to increase the delivery rates of parenting programs to families. Families NSW support is critical in enabling this program to be widely accessible to families across NSW. It is anticipated that information obtained as part of the evaluation of Triple P in NSW will be used to guide the next phases of the Triple P roll-out. Evaluation results are expected to be realised toward the end of 2011.

In 2010/11, the Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy funded 62 projects from the \$3.7 million budget. Projects focussed on school transition, supported playgroups, family workers, community capacity building and the provision of parenting information through the Aboriginal parenting strategy.

As part of the Aboriginal parenting strategy three parenting books were developed in 2010/11 to support Aboriginal parents and family workers in Hawkesbury, Western Sydney, Blue Mountains (Dharug & Gundungurra countries), Goodooga (Yuwaalaraay and Murrwarri countries) and Mid-north Coast (Gumbaynggirr, Dunghutti and Biripi countries). There are now 13 books which form the *Growing Up Strong* series, with a further two books planned for completion in 2011/12.

Community Services conducted a review of the Family Worker model which is largely funded through the Community Services component of the Families NSW funding allocation. The purpose of the review was to obtain an understanding of the key activities of the model including the number of family worker projects and funding allocation. There are currently 94 family worker projects with an estimated annual funding allocation of \$7M. The review found some overlap between the family worker model and other Families NSW service models, specifically the Schools as Community Centres model, as well as significant variability in the activities of the model. The next stage of the review will be to analyse the evidence base for family worker projects to determine how this can inform the Families NSW family worker model.

The 2009/10 evaluation of the Volunteer Home Visiting (VHV) service model highlighted some issues with the cost effectiveness of the VHV model. Following the evaluation, the model was reviewed and refined to a smaller target population targeting families on the upper end Level 1 of the NSW health level of care-service response classification.

Families NSW planning areas have now completed their regional strategic plans for 2011/12 – 2013/14. Part of this planning involved regions examining the data and other evidence about population changes and need in the area and making decisions about which service models or projects should be purchased to meet those needs. As part of this process, planning areas have now assessed whether the new VHV service model will be part of the suite of services purchased in the region. In some regions, VHV services have not continued beyond July 2011 and in other areas VHV services will continue to operate, but with a more limited scope.

## **Family and Community Services**

### **Ageing Disability and Home Care**

***Stronger Together 2: Stronger Together: A new direction for disability services in NSW 2006-2016*** is a 10-year plan to provide greater assistance and long-term practical solutions for people with a disability and their families. It involves major reforms and service expansions. The first five-year phase of the *Stronger Together* initiative saw 29,000 new places created compared to the initial target of 18,100.

Over the next five years (2011-2016), the NSW Government will provide \$2.02 billion in funding increases for *Stronger Together 2*. This funding will significantly expand service capacity with the number of places planned for delivery in the second phase totalling 47,200, with a greater proportion of the places targeting early intervention and prevention.

Key features of early childhood intervention aligning with the focus of *Stronger Together 2* include promoting child development, providing additional support at key transition points, maintaining formal and informal support arrangements around families, and building the capacity of local communities and mainstream services to respond to the needs of children and families.

The lifespan approach outlined in *Stronger Together 2* will mean better targeting of mainstream and community services which can meet the needs of children with a disability and their families, and reduce reliance on specialist disability services. Developing skills in children prior to school entry, and supporting families to develop a life stage approach to planning for their child, are central to the implementation of *Stronger Together 2*.

**The Early Childhood Intervention Coordination Program (ECICP):** ECICP is a Families NSW interagency project with Family and Community Services, Ageing, Disability and Home Care as lead agency. The program aims to coordinate early childhood intervention for children with a disability or developmental delay and their families. The ECICP involves the following NSW Government agencies through Families NSW:

- Family and Community Services - Community Services (Lead), Ageing, Disability and Home Care and Housing NSW;
- Department of Education and Communities; and
- NSW Health.

ECICP operates through a network of area and local committees across NSW. The membership of these committees comprises representatives of the government and non government sectors. In 2010/2011, up to \$120,000 was provided to support 15 Area Committee networking and local projects addressing capacity building, coordination, and information and awareness. Up to \$150,000 will be provided in 2011/12 to fund projects which are consistent with the policy directions as outlined in *Stronger Together 2* including:

- A focus on diagnosis and key transition points.
- Promoting community participation for families with a child with a disability.
- Supporting mainstream services to provide inclusive environments for children with a disability or developmental delay.
- Providing information about supports in the local community.

**Siblings Support Booklet:** As part of initiatives around creating sustainable support systems for families and individuals with disability, the '*Side by Side: Growing up with a brother or sister with a disability. Information to support families*' booklet was developed in collaboration with Siblings Australia. This information resource assists families who have a child with a disability to develop stronger resilience within the family unit. While the primary audience for this booklet is families (including siblings) of a child with a disability, additional potential audiences include staff/services providing support to these families. This booklet specifically assists families in supporting and understanding the needs of brothers and sisters of a child with a disability, containing practical information to support both the child with a disability and his/her siblings.

**Support Networks Program Evaluation:** Through *Stronger Together 1*, Ageing, Disability and Home Care funded seven demonstration projects to develop, test and implement flexible and innovative practices to support children and young people with a disability and their families develop informal and formal support networks. The Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales (SPRC) evaluation of this program reported that parents, siblings and children and young people with a disability experienced positive benefits from participation in Support Networks projects. Children and young people with a disability require different service models to build support networks than those utilised with parents and siblings. Options to enhance future support networks are also discussed in this report, and include the development of models that better incorporate principles of person centred thinking, to ensure adaptability to meet individual characteristics and needs across the lifespan, and approaches to strengthen community inclusion.

**Parent Line:** In 2010/11, Ageing, Disability and Home Care worked with Families NSW and Community Services to enhance information, counselling and support services provided by 'Parent Line' for parents of children with a disability. Parent Line is an existing mainstream telephone counselling, information and referral service for parents of children 0 -18 years in NSW, including parents of children with a disability. 'Parent Line' operates 24 hours, 7 days per week, and is staffed by a team of trained professional counsellors with qualifications in social work, psychology, education, health and social welfare. The additional funding to Parent Line enabled staff to receive training in Triple P Stepping Stones to enhance disability knowledge and professional supervision in this area; update the Parent Line website; promote and market their service to families of children with disability; and improve the data collection system to include additional items on disability. The funding will also enable Parent Line to explore options for improved access for families in rural and regional NSW, Aboriginal families, and families with a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

**Autism Specific Child Care Centre:** In December 2010, Ageing, Disability and Home Care provided a one off grant of \$2 million capital and an annual allocation of \$1.2 million operational expenses to SDN Child and Family Services, in consortium with Autism Spectrum Australia, to provide an autism specific child care service in Greater Western Sydney, called *SDN Beranga*. An outreach component of the service commenced in July 2011, with a focus on building the capacity of existing mainstream child care centres in the Cumberland/Prospect, Nepean, Inner West, and South West Sydney Local Planning Areas, to support children with autism. Land has been purchased in Rooty Hill for the child care centre and plans are progressing with Council approval processes. The two components of the service will provide increased flexibility to meet individual child and family needs through quality child care that is specifically designed for children with autism, as well as enhancing the capacity of mainstream child care settings in meeting the needs of children with autism and their families.

**Aboriginal Diagnosis Support Positions:** Ageing, Disability and Home Care is working with Community Services and Families NSW to locate Aboriginal Diagnosis Support workers within Integrated Aboriginal Child and Family Centres. The Aboriginal Diagnosis Support Positions provide time limited support to Aboriginal families and children to gain access to supports within a disability specialist or mainstream / Aboriginal service system. A total of eight workers will be employed across NSW to provide direct support to Aboriginal families who have a child diagnosed with a disability or developmental delay or who are in the process of receiving a diagnosis.

## **Department of Education and Communities**

Education and Communities continues to implement its Evaluation Framework within the 48 Schools as Community Centres (SaCC) projects across NSW. Data on outcomes for parents and children was again collected in 2010.

The data shows that in 2010, around 4,000 families with young children regularly participated in Schools as Community Centres projects across NSW. Of these families, 17% were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background.

Data collected through a parent survey in 2010 shows that SaCC projects have successfully supported families with children to connect to other families, with 85% of parents and/or carers reporting that they made a new friend or social connection and 54% reporting that they got to know someone they could turn to in a crisis.

SaCC projects built links with other local services and supported families to access those services when needed. Families were supported to connect with other services with 62% of parents and/or carers reporting that they used a service not used before.

The success of SaCC projects in supporting children's transition to school was demonstrated by 89% of parents and/or carers reporting that their child who was going to school next year was doing better on a range of social, emotional and communication skills.

SaCC projects supported early literacy development for children with 62% of parents and/or carers reporting that they looked at or read books more often together with their children as a result of participating in SaCC initiatives.

The success of Schools as Community Centres projects in implementing interagency collaboration is demonstrated by 77% of SaCC project initiatives for families with young children being delivered in partnership with other human service agencies.

A number of changes have occurred to the provision of SaCC projects across the state, as part of the planning process undertaken by Families NSW planning areas to develop regional strategic plans for 2011/12 – 2013/14.

Each of the relevant Families NSW regional groups considered whether to assume responsibility for funding the original six SaCC projects. These projects were previously funded separately through annual contributions from a number of human service agencies. Three of the planning areas agreed to include one of these SaCC projects in the suite of services to be purchased from 1 July 2011.

Other changes to SaCC projects, including days of operation, location and target community, have occurred in a number of areas in response to population changes and emerging needs. The Department of Education and Communities, as lead agency, will support the implementation of these changes over the next three years.

## **NSW Health**

### **Universal Health Home Visiting (UHHV)**

UHHV is the offer and, where accepted, the provision of a home visit by a child and family health nurse to families with a new baby. The purpose of the UHHV is to enhance access to postnatal child and families services by providing families with the opportunity to receive their first postnatal health service by a child and family health nurse within their home environment.

The UHHV provides health staff with the opportunity to:

- engage more effectively with families who may not otherwise access postnatal health services
- identify possible needs with families within their own home
- facilitate early access to local support services.

Support services not only include the broad range of universal child and family health services available to all parents with a newborn, but also targeted services for families who may be identified as requiring additional support.

In the 2009/10 financial year, more than 87,000 families with a newborn were offered a UHHV and 80% of families in NSW with a newborn were provided a UHHV by a child and family health nurse.

An additional 4% of families with a newborn received a UHHV by a child and family health nurses in the 2009/10 financial year compared to the 2008/09 financial year, and an additional 10% of families received a UHHV in 2009/10 financial year compared to the 2007/08 financial year.

### **Sustaining NSW Families (SNF)**

SNF is the Sustained Health Home Visiting program being implemented in NSW and is the provision of intensive structured health home visits by a child and family health nurse which commence antenatally and continue until the child's second birthday.

SNF aims to support and strengthen the capacity of parents to provide a safe and nurturing environment for their children and improve the health, developmental and wellbeing outcomes for infants and children.

Implementation of the SNF program commenced in three sites in the 2009/10 financial year: Kurri Kurri/Maitland/Cessnock; Fairfield/Liverpool; and Wyong.

In early 2011, two new sites for the SNF program were established at Arncliffe in South Eastern Sydney and Lismore/Kyogle/Richmond Valley Local Government Areas in Northern NSW. The new sites will implement two variations to the SNF program. The Northern NSW site is designed to enhance service provision for Aboriginal families whilst the Arncliffe site is designed to enhance service provision for families from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds with low levels of English language proficiency.

### **SAFE START**

The NSW Health *Supporting Families Early (SFE) package* is underpinned by the FNSW Strategy. Implementation of the SFE policy and guidelines aims to strengthen primary health and continuing care in the community for families expecting or caring for a baby and who are experiencing depression or other mental health problems.

An online training and education program introducing the SFE Package and providing SAFE START Assessment and Screening training has been available since February 2010. More than 2,000 NSW Health employees, predominantly Midwives and Child & Family Health Nurses, have successfully completed the twelve module (six hour) online training program over the past year.

### **Statewide Eyesight Preschooler Screening (StEPS) program**

The StEPS program is a free universal vision screening program for four year old children in NSW.

In the 2010 calendar year, 94% of four year old children in NSW were offered the StEPS program. Approximately 7,000 children were identified with possible vision problems and referred to an eye health professional for a diagnostic vision assessment and treatment where applicable. Over 1,500 of these children were identified with potentially significant vision problem/s and referred as a '*High Priority Referral*' for further assessment as soon as possible.

Early 2011, NSW Health funded three Local Health Districts to implement dedicated tertiary Paediatric Ophthalmic Outpatient Clinics for children identified with vision problems and referred for further assessment via the StEPS program. These clinics provide tertiary diagnostic vision assessment services for children identified with significant vision loss and reduce waiting times to ensure that children referred via the StEPS program are reviewed in a timely manner so that treatment outcomes can be maximised.

### ***Having a Baby* book**

The *Having a Baby* book is a comprehensive reference guide for women who are pregnant or planning to have a baby, and their families. It offers expert advice to women on what they can expect during pregnancy, birth and the first weeks with their new baby. All women who book into a public maternity service are provided with a free copy. E-copies are available in English and five community languages.

*Having a Baby* was first published in 2006 and is currently being reviewed by key stakeholders to ensure that the information is current. It is anticipated that the new edition of the book will be available early in 2012.