

Whittlesea Best Start Project Progress Report

November 2004

1. Partnership Model

a) Local Early Children's Services

The Whittlesea Best Start Demonstration Project is made up from over 30 early years children's services within the City of Whittlesea. This partnership includes preschools, primary schools, the City of Whittlesea, Kildonan Child and Family Services, Anglicare, Plenty Valley Community Health Services, Norparrin and Education Program for Infants and Children.

b) Parent Advisory Group

A Parent Advisory Group has been formed with local parents advising the Partnership about the relevance of projects and activities for the local community and how services can be more responsive to the needs of local parents and community.

2. Success of the Project to Date

The Whittlesea Best Start Project has been successful in:

- Forming a partnership between local early years services.
- Enhancing collaboration between local early years services.
- Joining human and financial resources from different service providers to maximise the outcome for parents and community and enhance service delivery.
- Co-ordinating its approach to service delivery.
- Planning and developing projects that are considered priorities for the City of Whittlesea.
- Involving parents in decision making.

3. Consultations

a) Consultations with Service Providers

Consultation with service providers indicated that there was a need to develop projects around health, education, wellbeing and service co-ordination. The consultation also outlined gaps in early years children's services and a need for more resources and services in the area.

b) Consultation with Parents

The Whittlesea community consultations highlighted some very important issues that can be linked within the **Best Start** service delivery principles and can be categorised into three main themes.

These themes are:

1. Improved information provision
2. Parent support and education programs
3. Service gaps / lack of adequate services in the Whittlesea municipality.

c) Consultation with Children

Over 130 children at preschools were consulted and assisted to construct key messages and images to promote positive parenting in Whittlesea. These messages and images were developed into postcards and bookmarks and have been printed and distributed.

5. Final Action Plan

The Whittlesea Best Start Demonstration Project as a part of the Funding and Service Agreement has developed a Final Action Plan which was submitted to Department of Human Services in December 2003.

6. Projects

As a part of the Final Action Plan and to respond to the community needs the Whittlesea Best Start Partnership has identified the following broad and interconnected project areas for the municipality.

1. Communication/Linkages
2. Parenting Programs
3. Vulnerable Children

Working groups have been established to implement each of these projects.

Subsequently, the Partnership developed more specific projects under each of these projects.

Specific Projects

Communication/Linkages:

The Communication Working Group has developed the following projects:

1. Promoting Positive Parenting Messages – A Marketing Campaign
2. Forum of Early Childhood Providers to be held on 30 November 2004
3. Local advertising campaign to increase attendance at 3 ½ year old Maternal and Child Health Developmental Check
4. Children and Family Services Directory to be included in the City of Whittlesea New Residents' Kit
5. Literacy Initiative: "Story telling" in different community languages

Parenting Programs:

1. Parent Education and Support Programs
2. Antenatal Programs
3. Books for Babies Project

Vulnerable Children:

1. Supported Playgroup and Community Development Playgroups

For further information please contact Whittlesea Best Start Demonstration Project Community Facilitator on (03) 9217 2197.