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Select Category

- Safe Care
 Effective Care

- Personal Care
 Connected Care

INTRODUCTION

The early years in a child's life are crucial for the foundation of health and wellbeing. Early identification of developmental delay or vulnerability and an appropriate care pathway are critical to optimise outcomes.

Children living in the northern suburbs of Geelong experience some of the highest rates of developmental vulnerability in Australia, and existing services to provide care for children and their families are either non-existent or insufficient to meet community need.

Geelong's northern community faces additional challenges known to be associated with poorer health outcomes including significant socio-economic disadvantage and high rates of cultural & linguistic diversity.

Barwon Health North (BHN), a new state-of-the-art facility opened in January 2020, was designed to provide a new service for children with developmental delay and their families. BHN's Child & Family Health Service (CFHS) was first established in 2020 to provide assessment, intervention and linking to other providers for children aged 0-6 who experience developmental delay.

OBJECTIVES

The goal of BHN's CFHS is to provide accessible, timely care which optimises readiness for school across all developmental domains. Key objectives include:

- service response which is timely and available for 0-6 year olds with developmental delay;
- specific focus on early intervention until the child reaches eligibility for school; and
- services delivered by an inter-professional team with the mix of services chosen based upon the specific needs of each child and family.

"Together with families of the North, we help children realise their full potential."

METHODS + IMPLEMENTATION

Business case built on Local Australian Early Development Census data for Northern Suburbs.

Model of care for CFHS was developed.

Care underpinned by a multidisciplinary team in partnership with a range of internal and external services.

The staffing profile of CFHS - Paediatricians, a Child Psychiatrist, Speech Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Audiologists, Physiotherapists, Psychologists, Social Workers, Dietitians, and Allied Health Assistants.

Pathways have been developed to link with community based Children's services to promote ongoing long term care.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

- Referral parameters and tool developed;
- Key stakeholders groups developed;
- Daily intake and screening by Team Coordinator;
- Holistic comprehensive assessments conducted;
- Goal-directed, evidence-based interventions provided;
- Regular case conferences support care delivery, clinician troubleshooting and complex decision making;
- Process for escalation of care to the statutory child protection system, if required; and
- Clear exit pathway through to community service providers allowing timely access to NDIS services.

RESULTS

A comparison of government data collected in 2012 & 2018 shows the escalating prevalence of developmental vulnerabilities in Geelong's northern suburbs, which is one of the highest in the state.

C&FH Service commenced July 2020.

The importance of engaging caregivers and building their capacity to provide positive learning environments is increasingly recognised.

C&FH Team addresses both the child's presenting symptoms, and any underlying family health, behavioral or social issues that requires intervention.

KEY LEARNINGS

The Child & Family Health Services team at Barwon Health North is responding to the growing need for timely access to integrated and family centred care for children with developmental delay.

From conception to 2 years of age defines many later medical and developmental outcomes; hence prevention is paramount.

The needs of school-aged children and adolescents in the northern suburbs will be examined and form the basis of future CFHS expansion.

SUSTAINABILITY

The service is outcome focused and will measure improvement in school readiness; linkages to long term programs for children and changes in the AEDC data, to demonstrate value of service.

