

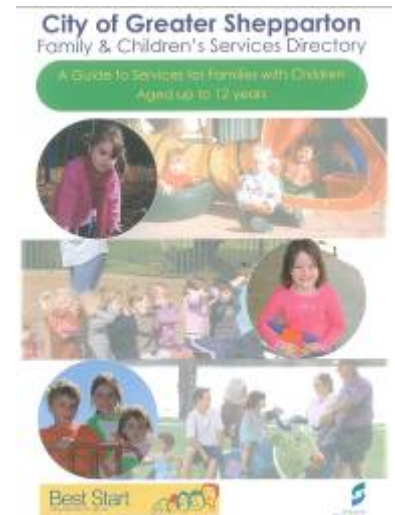


Greater Shepparton BEST START Demonstration Project

Information Bulletin Number 5 July 2004

Greater Shepparton Family & Children's Services Directory - a guide to services for families with children aged up to 12 years

Just released is the community version of the Greater Shepparton Family and Children's Services Directory. Presented as a booklet and developed with information provided by agencies for the service provider version of the directory, the booklet will be a valuable resource for families living in Greater Shepparton. The booklet will be available through a number of avenues, including the Baby Book Bag, Maternal and Child Health centres, preschools, child care centres, community houses and at Greater Shepparton City Council. If you require more information or would like to provide feedback on the directory please contact Belinda Whitelaw on 58 329 790.



Focussing on Family Centred Practice

One theme that has consistently emerged throughout the Demonstration Project activities is the central importance that practitioner/parent relationships play in influencing the level of benefit families gain from their contact with early childhood services. The 2003 research conducted for Best Start by the Brotherhood of St Lawrence supports this by saying:

'It cannot be stressed enough that it is the little, personal things that count most. Worker after worker emphasised that ongoing service use and satisfaction is dependant on the workers capacity to establish a positive relationship with children and parents.'

Linked to this is the incorporation of strength based practise and family centred approach within early childhood services. There is a 'paradigm shift' happening whereby practitioners are moving away from the 'expert' stance to recognising the need to work in partnership with parents, and respond to experiences in their day to day lives. This all encourage parents to realise their skills and competencies and develop positive relationships with their children.

The DHS Integrated Early Years Training in November 2003 and March 2004 was the first step in looking at how the value of this more flexible approach can be further developed in local early childhood services. A key theme of Best Start has been adopting a more family centred approach and looking at ways in which services can be reshaped to better meet the diverse needs of families.

Greater Shepparton Best Start is excited to be taking this process to the next stage. After talking to a range of leading organisations in the field of family centred practice, the Queen Elizabeth Centre has been engaged to develop a 5 day training package which focuses on our own local training needs and the characteristics of our community; and will incorporate local expertise in the delivery of this training. The training package will be developed by November 2004, with the first pilot commencing in February 2005. Finally, thanks to Di Ford (Berry St), Lorraine Pelzer and Dianne O'Bree (GVFC) who provided valuable input into the development of the project model.

EARLY CHILDHOOD HEALTH

Involving Fathers Project

Another project that is making good progress has involved pizzas, lots of coffee and Dad's juggling nappy bags and babies. Working in partnership with Relationships Australia, Best Start has developed two different approaches to creating more opportunities for Dad's to become involved with their child's 'early years'.

The First Time Dad's Groups are being run on a Saturday morning at Maternal and Child Health Centres. Male facilitators run a 4 week program focussing on infant first aid, baby massage, creative play and the experiences of being a new dad. The initial sessions at Scoresby Ave MCH Centre in March/April 2004 had attendances lower than hoped but we learnt a great deal about how to publicise and structure the program. We are now looking forward to the next one to be run in Tatura in a different format.

The '*FUN Dad's Make a Difference*' program held at St Georges Rd Primary School got off to a great start with 200 parents and children attending the introductory pizza night. Gary Dornau, on behalf of Relationships Australia led parents through the format of the next 5 weeks where dads reflected on their own experiences of being parented, their own fathering role, and also spent time with their child in a variety of activities. Next '*Dad's Make a Difference*' will be at Katandra West Primary School in July/August 2004.

BREASTFEEDING WORKGROUP

Make sure you have marked Saturday 21st August in your diary to attend the Greater Shepparton Breastfeeding Forum – Contemporary and Community Perspectives. With well known keynote speakers including Dr Stephen Graves, Sue Cox, Donna Ramsey, Julie Quinlaven and Ann Hall, the forum is sure to be of interest to both professionals and community members.

The forum has been organised by the Breastfeeding workgroup associated with Best Start and is supported by Australian Breastfeeding Association, GV Community Health Service, GV Family Care, GV Health and Greater Shepparton City Council.

The workgroup was formed to investigate issues such as availability of breastfeeding facilities, inconsistency in breastfeeding advice and information, community awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding and acceptance of breastfeeding in the community. The workgroup is also working towards the concept of Greater Shepparton as a breastfeeding friendly city, with the renovation of the tower facility in the Maude Street Mall and approaching local businesses to become breastfeeding friendly places.

PARENT EDUCATION

Adolescent Antenatal Care & Education Project

Building on the strong rapport they have developed with adolescent parents and knowledge of their needs, Peta Crosier from The Bridge and Jenny Cook from Goulburn Valley Community Health Service are working with Best Start to look at more appropriate, community based models for providing adolescent antenatal care. Recent publicity has highlighted Greater Shepparton's high teenage pregnancy rate and data collated by Peta and Jenny indicate the very low rates of attendance by pregnant adolescents at traditional antenatal classes. The initial phase of this 2 year project has been to conduct research into what approaches and models are most effective in supporting pregnant adolescents and promoting optimal health care.

Many regional centres in Victoria already have specialised adolescent programs and so it is timely to look at the establishment of such a program for Greater Shepparton. Midwives from Goulburn Valley Health will assist Peta and Jenny in providing a weekly antenatal care program at The Bridge that will focus on both the health and social needs of pregnant adolescents. Peta and Jenny will be attending a Childbirth Educators Course run by the Royal Women's Hospital in August 2004 with the aim of commencing a local program in September /October 2004. The project steering committee meets monthly and has recently combined with the steering committee of the Wanganui Young Mum's Re-entering Education Program. The shared learning is valued by both reference groups.

COMMUNITY LITERACY

BABY BOOK BAG INITIATIVE

Much planning and discussion has occurred over the past 6 months in relation to the Best Start Baby Book Bag initiative. The initiative aims to promote to parents the importance of reading and talking to their children from birth, and will be supported through the development of a Baby Book Bag that will be provided to new parents before their baby is 4 months old. The bag will include a baby book (kindly donated by DK publishing), the Greater Shepparton Family and Children's Services Directory, information on local libraries, information about choosing children's books and a nursery rhyme placemat. It is anticipated the bags will be disseminated through Maternal and Child Health nurses across Greater Shepparton (except Mooroopna which has the Berry Street ELF project) with the first bag to be handed out mid August.

Recently 'Learning Together' literacy sessions were held in the five Best Start community areas to launch the Baby Book Bag initiative and to promote the everyday literacy activities parents can do with their children to support their literacy learning. The sessions were aimed at parents/carers and children aged 5 years and under. Almost 300 children attended the sessions, each receiving a show bag full of information about reading, listening, talking and singing, and a book to read. Graham Davey was the special guest for the 'Learning Together' sessions and captivated both children and adults with his story telling (see photo below). Graham also visited a number of primary schools during his time in Shepparton and spoke at a public meeting in Mooroopna.

Preschool to School Transition Information Sessions and Primary School Booklet

Following on from the success of last year, five transition sessions were held across Greater Shepparton to inform parents about the transition from preschool to school and provide helpful hints on how to help prepare their child for school. Individual schools were represented at each of the sessions, which included four evening and one daytime session. Feedback from parents has again been very positive with the majority valuing the opportunity to meet and speak to school principals and receive information about school readiness. A primary school booklet has also been produced and disseminated to parents of preschool aged children.



LITERACY RESOURCE WORKER

The library has strengthened its working relationship with the Best Start project with Cathy Artridge engaged as the Best Start Literacy Resource Worker. Cathy is employed by Goulburn Valley Regional Library and already facilitates a number of valuable services through the local libraries including toddler storytime, school holiday activities, visits to MCH first time parent groups, playgroups and preschools, and organises special activities for events such as Library Week, Book Week and Literacy and Numeracy Week. All of the above were documented in the Best Start Final Action Plan as important services and activities to engage parents and children, promote Best Start and above all promote the importance of reading to children. Cathy also played a major role in the 'Learning Together' sessions and is currently concentrating on the development of the Baby Book Bags with the Community Literacy workgroup.

GETTING CONNECTED

SCHOOL HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

Based on feedback from parents during the community consultations, a calendar of school holiday activities has been developed for the five Best Start community areas. Activities commenced during the April school holidays with a Family Fun Day in North Shepparton and three 'Music and Movement' sessions in Mooroopna. Both were well attended and received positive feedback from parents.

Activities for the July school holidays included a Family Fun Day in South Shepparton, 'Cooking Made Fun' sessions in Mooroopna and Tatura and 'Music and Movement' sessions in North Shepparton and Katandra West. All activities were either booked out or well attended.

PLAYGROUPS

Best Start has recently supported the establishment of several playgroups in Greater Shepparton. Both Wilmot Road and St Georges Road Primary Schools have a playgroup operating from their school, on Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning respectively. The playgroups have two facilitators, including one Iraqi facilitator, to organise activities for the session, and bus transport is provided for families accessing the playgroup.

The South Shepparton playgroup, Mooroopna Park Primary School playgroup and Patricia Smith playgroup are all well attended and have received positive feedback from families.



TAFE CHILDCARE STUDENT PLACEMENTS

Discussions with Cheryl Moylan, Childcare Co-ordinator at GOTAFE, have resulted in students studying childcare participating in a number of playgroups and occasional care programs as part of their practical placement. This allows students to gain valuable experience and skills in relation to communicating with parents. The placements will continue until the end of the year with a rotating roster established to ensure all students gain experience in a number of community and early childhood settings.

BREAKING CYCLES BUILDING FUTURES PROJECT

With only 6 months of funding to go for this project the BCBF reference group and Best Start Partnership is considering ways to continue after December 2004. The Patricia Smith playgroup is very successful with an average of 6 or 7 families attending each week. Due to the popularity of the playgroup it now also runs during the school holidays. 'Lunches' is a new component of the project, and involves parents attending an information session over lunch and learning about an issue or topic of interest. Two 'Lunches' have been held and were well attended. Jenny and Robyn (MCH nurse), recently organised a 'Blokes, Boys, Barbies and Balls' fun day for families. Nearly 60 people attended and enjoyed the opportunity to play football and soccer with their children, not to mention the free BBQ lunch. The Office of Housing are working with us to develop a project whereby information and contact with new families moving into the North Shepparton area is made, with the aim of linking them into local services.