

Building collaboration

intersections of domestic and family violence and child protection

Project update
December 2019

The Early Intervention Research Directorate (EIRD) has funded the establishment of the Postdoctoral Fellowship Program in the Social Work Innovation Research Living Space (SWIRLS) at Flinders University. Professor Sarah Wendt, Dr Carmela Bastian and Dr Jenny van der Arend are working together with EIRD and key stakeholders to co-design collaborative practice responses and develop understanding of 'what works' when responding to and supporting children and families experiencing domestic/family violence and child protection concerns.

We are working to develop and document research involving two specific collaborative responses in the southern metropolitan region of Adelaide: collaborative services between the Department for Child Protection and Konar Winmil Yunti (KWY), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Services, and between the Department for Child Protection and Women's Safety Services SA (WSSSA).

One of the aims of the research project is to co-design, trial, and test sustainable collaborations across the Department for Child Protection and domestic and family violence specialist agencies so children and families can live positive lives.

In the last four months we have been working closely with our key stakeholders in co-designing collaborative service responses or "prototypes". We have had practitioners from both organisations come together over a series of workshops, engage in conversations about collaborative practice and build solutions on improving collaboration and outcomes for children and their families. We thank the practitioners for their time and commitment to this process.

We have co-designed two prototypes which will be trialed and tested in the Southern Metropolitan Region of Adelaide as from November 2019.



Collaboration between Women's Safety Services SA and Department for Child Protection

The implementation of a collaborative service prototype between the Department for Child Protection and Women's Safety Services SA will improve outcomes for children and their mothers. The collaborative service prototype is informed by the belief that removal or risk of removal from family is present in the lives of children who experience risk due to domestic and family violence and other complex factors. The implementation of a collaborative service prototype will also result in increased knowledge and understanding of the pattern of perpetrator behaviours and how this impacts on his parenting and the safety of children and their mothers.

More specifically:

- The trial will include the Noarlunga and St Mary's Offices (Department for Child Protection) and Southern Adelaide Domestic Violence Service and Ninko Kurtangga Patpangga, The Southern Regional Aboriginal Family Violence Service.
- The Department for Child Protection has funded the position of Specialist Liaison Officer who will facilitate the collaboration between the two organisations and project work.
- The target group for the collaboration will be with women and children whom receive services from both organisations
- The specific aims of this collaboration will be:
 - Children's safety is a primary consideration
 - Mothers are afforded opportunities and support to ensure their safety and the safety of their children
 - Identify and name the behaviours of the perpetrator and recognise the impact on children and their mothers.
 - Increase visibility of the perpetrators to keep women and their children safe
 - Reduce service system chaos
 - Promote healing and recovery of children and their mothers
 - Reduce renotifications to child protection system

Collaboration between Konar Winmil Yunti (KWY), Aboriginal Family Services and Department for Child Protection

Implementation of an early collaborative response by KWY and DCP, for Aboriginal children and their families experiencing family violence and child protection concerns, will help reduce the systems chaos experienced by these families and improve outcomes for children, families and communities.

More specifically:

- The trial will involve Noarlunga and St Mary's Offices (Department for Child Protection) and KWY's Southern Hub
- The Department for Child Protection has also funded the position of Specialist Liaison Officer who will facilitate the collaboration between the two organisations and project work.
- The following families will be eligible for a service:
 - Aboriginal children and families who have been assessed as warranting statutory intervention from DCP
 - Family violence has been identified as one of the risk factors
 - Adults in the children's family environment continue to be connected although do not need to be living together
 - Children/ren are in the care of the mother and/or perpetrator and continue to be impacted by the violence.
- The specific aims include:
 - Keep children and their mothers safe
 - Increase visibility, accountability of perpetrators and engage them in taking responsibility for the impact of violence on the children and their mothers
 - Reduce system chaos by providing a more joined up response
 - Promote the healing and recovery of families

The research team and the practitioners will be working alongside each other in the process of data collection for the next 6 – 8 months. Information will be collected at regular intervals from practitioners, children and families and case files. This information will be used to make any changes to improve collaborative practice.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Professor Sarah Wendt swirls@flinders.edu.au