

## Chapter Four - Early Intervention Approaches to Community Safety

**“Community Safety is when it doesn't matter if I go out or if I stay at home”.**

-6 year old, Kidspeak, Waterloo Green

### 4.1 Introduction

There is an increasing body of evidence that suggests that interventions early in life can have long term impacts on crime and other social problems. The work of James Garbarino (1980) showed that even across socioeconomically similar suburbs, evaluations of community well-being, in particular how connected people feel and their level of trust, can be linked with higher or lower risk of child abuse and neglect. The results support the concept of “neighbourhood risk” and point to the importance of developing responses that are not just aimed at children and their parents, but responses that support the community to develop and become a better environment in which to raise children.<sup>34</sup>

Overseas research such as the Perry Pre-school Project<sup>35</sup>, the Elmira Prenatal Early Infancy Project and the RAND study have all revealed that for every dollar spent now up to \$4 dollars will be saved later. It should be stressed that these programs were not originally designed to prevent crime. Rather they were established as a way of increasing the life chances of socio-economically disadvantaged children via better health, education and employment.<sup>36</sup>

The effect of such initiatives may not be seen in the short term however it is vital that these issues be addressed now to alleviate the economic and social conditions that prompt the issues affecting children and families as an important investment in local crime prevention.

### 4.2 The Commonwealth Government and Early Intervention

In Australia the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department commissioned a study in 1999 titled Pathways to Prevention which found that:

---

<sup>34</sup> Calvert G. (1999) Building Communities and Preventing Crime, N.S.W. Office of Children and Young People

<sup>35</sup> Chisholm J. (2000) Benefit, Cost Analysis and Crime Prevention, Australian Institute of Criminology, Trends and Issues Paper No: 147

<sup>36</sup> Early Childhood Interventions: Benefits, Costs and Savings

- Few early intervention programs and services explicitly have crime prevention as an objective with the primary focus being on better health, improved education and better employment opportunities
- Early in life interventions such as around birth or in pre-school are particularly important as are interventions at other crucial transition points in life and
- Co-ordination of programs and service delivery needs improvement and more attention needs to be paid to evaluation.<sup>37</sup>

### **The Redfern-Waterloo Pathways to Prevention Program**

In 2001 the Commonwealth Government sought expressions of interest from state governments to implement early intervention or developmental crime prevention initiatives. The N.S.W. Crime Prevention Division of the Attorney General's Department submitted an expression of interest to develop a project in Redfern-Waterloo. The project aims to help the community provide a greater range of services and more effective support to children aged 0-14 who are at risk and to their families.

Following interviews with 93 people as well as two groups of twenty five participants the consultations revealed that there is a need for:

- More, and more effective family support services
- More outreach work with children and young people who are most at-risk of anti-social or offending behaviour
- Improved resources for existing services working with children, young people and families
- More attractive public spaces and physical environments including more free or low cost recreational opportunities for children and families and
- Better facilities and premises for community organisations and services.

Based on this information a school-based intervention was selected as the preferred option to be developed for the implementation of the second phase of the project. The project is likely to employ three workers based at Alexandria Park Community school to:

- Progress transition to school issues for pre-schoolers
- Enable successful high school transitions and
- Provide supportive environments for children at risk of developing learning and behavioural difficulties which may lead to school failure and involvement in crime.

The project will also support Darlington Public School and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Waterloo.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Commonwealth Attorney General's Department (1999) Pathways to Prevention, National Crime Prevention, Canberra

<sup>38</sup> Commonwealth Attorney General's Office, Pathways to Prevention: Redfern / Waterloo Project Update, Winter 2003

### 4.3 The New South Wales Government and Early Intervention

The New South Wales Government has responded to the issue of early intervention through the introduction of the Families First strategy. Families First involves spending \$117 million over four years as a prevention and early intervention strategy aimed at helping parents to give their children a good start in life. This is based on international research which reveals that supporting families in the early years of a child's life will have a lasting influence. Families First commenced in South East Sydney in September 2002.

Additional initiatives of the State Government include:

- Establishment of the Office of Child Care, the N.S.W. Commission for Children and Young People and the Office of the Children's Guardian
- Amendments to the N.S.W. Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 and
- Review of the legislation and regulations that govern children's services in N.S.W.



#### Alexandria Park Community School

The N.S.W. Department of Education and Training has recently established the Alexandria Park Community School following a merger between Cleveland Street High School and Redfern, Waterloo and Alexandria Public Schools meaning that the school takes students from kindergarten through to year 12. Many of the students attending the new Alexandria Park Community School are drawn from the Redfern-Waterloo area. The old Cleveland Street High School is being converted to a kindergarten to year 8 school which includes a Reading Recovery Centre and an on-campus Schools as Community Centre, Connect Redfern. A separate pre-school is also located on the site.

Community services to be located on the campus include Connect Redfern for children 0-8, Centacare and counselling services. This is an innovative model in that it provides opportunities for parents and the wider community to establish links with the school providing a focal point to access these opportunities.

The old Alexandria Public School has been refurbished to provide the new Community School's year 9 to year 12 senior campus including a library, performance workshop, kitchen facilities for training purposes, a visual arts workshop, a multi-media workshop and a science laboratory. The senior campus is also offering a range of traineeships for HSC students in sport and fitness, hospitality, retail and information technology. The school currently enrolls approximately 350 children and young people. The school has recognised the importance of key transition points in the lives of children and young people such as enrolling at a new school and has a focus on literacy programs with high student to staff ratios.



*The new Junior campus of the Alexandria Park Community School.*

The Alexandria Park Community School has also drafted a proposal in partnership with Dulwich Hill High School, Marrickville High School, Tempe Languages High School and Newtown High School of the Performing Arts to link the schools into a college structure so they can work co-operatively and not have to compete for students. The draft plan will provide more subject choices for students and achieve economies of scale by sharing resources and teachers. Initial reports suggest the Minister has received the proposal favourably.

#### **4.4 The Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project and Early Intervention**

The Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project has recognised the need for early intervention in the two suburbs and has undertaken a number of practical initiatives to address key issues affecting children and families in the area including:

##### **Intensive Family Support Service**

The Intensive Family Support Service is a new model of service funded by the Premier's Department in partnership with the Department of Community Services as the lead agency. Barnardos Australia is delivering the service which will shortly commence operating from premises at 174 Redfern Street, Redfern. The Intensive Family Support Service targets at risk children, young people and their families particularly those who do not easily engage with traditional services, the primary method of family intervention being home visitations and a case management approach.

The role of the service will be to improve a family's coping mechanisms and to reduce the need for child protection intervention in their lives. Staffing consists of a full time Program Manager and six part and full time Family Support Workers as well as clerical support. There are three Aboriginal staff members.



### **Aboriginal In-Home Support Service**

The aim of the In-Home Support for Aboriginal Families Service is to meet the complex needs of some Aboriginal families in Redfern and Waterloo who require additional support. Services provided may include counselling, in-home support, case management, life skills training, parent education and relationship support.

Mudgin Gal Aboriginal Women's Corporation will be running the service with support from Barnardos.

### **Cultural and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Counselling**

The key elements of this service will be to respond to the specific needs of culturally and linguistically diverse families. The service will provide a comprehensive and flexible approach through:

- Assertive outreach to families
- Counselling services and
- Management of brokerage for language specific services

Centacare is the agency responsible for providing counselling to the culturally and linguistically diverse community.

### **Aboriginal Family Violence Initiative**

The Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project was approached by the Aboriginal community to support the Redfern Aboriginal Family Violence Initiative. The Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project agreed to support the initiative by facilitating a process to determine better responses to family violence in Aboriginal communities including better co-ordination of existing services.

## **Alexandria Park Sports Development Program**

The Alexandria Park Sports Development Program has been funded by the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project. The school has appointed a Sports Co-ordinator who co-ordinates an after school sports program five afternoons a week. This program is open to all children and young people who attend school in Redfern and Waterloo.

The Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project has also provided additional funding to non-government family support services to help children, young people and families in need.

## **Case Co-ordination**

The Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project has funded the Redfern-Waterloo Case Co-ordination model. This approach acknowledges that no single agency has the capacity to address the needs of high risk children and young people in Redfern and Waterloo. This model aims to establish a clear process through which agencies can work together to effect a more comprehensive case planning process that considers the issues for a child or young person in a holistic manner and creates a culture of collaboration and joint case management based within the Redfern and Waterloo service system. Funded for a period of twelve months, three case co-ordinators will be employed in order to establish an integrated Case Co-ordination framework amongst human service agencies.

## **4.5 South Sydney Council Services – Children and Families and the Draft Social Plan**

The South Sydney Council Draft Social Plan has identified a number of priority needs and issues which form the basis of this section of the plan. As with previous research conducted the issues and needs identified do not relate directly to crime prevention or community safety in terms of their primary focus, however they are vital in terms of making substantial differences to a child's experience of growing up so they are less likely to commit crime. Issues identified include:

- lack of child care places especially for children under 2 years of age
- unaffordable child care and after school care particularly for families on low incomes
- there is a need for greater flexibility in service delivery
- lack of appropriate services for children aged 10-14
- Council's Family Day Care service has a long waiting list of children needing care and a shortage of available carers
- need for resourcing and training for children's services working with families with high support needs and
- A significant number of families in the South Sydney area experience high levels of social, economic and cultural disadvantage which makes them vulnerable to problems in relation to crime and safety, domestic violence, education and literacy, employment, economic development, drug and alcohol use and abuse, parenting, housing and homelessness, children at risk of abuse and neglect and poor school attendance.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> South Sydney City Council (2003) Draft Social Plan

## **Redfern Occasional Child Care Centre**

Council runs the Redfern Occasional Child Care Centre (ROCC) in Redfern. One of the major reasons this centre was established was due to the relatively high incidence of children at risk and the lack of affordable respite child care for non-working families in the community.

Access to affordable respite child care assists families, particularly those with limited social supports, by giving a break from the often stressful role of parenting. This can be a 'safety valve' for parents under pressure, and also provides an enriching environment for children.

Unlike long day care centres which give priority to working families, ROCC gives priority to non working, single parent families, families/children at risk, families who find it difficult to access other forms of care, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, low income families and NESB families.

ROCC has recently received funding from DOCS to undertake an Indigenous Support Project over the next 3 years. Under this project, identified families will be offered substantially subsidised child care in recognition of affordability issues with the cost of care. A dedicated worker will also work with identified Indigenous children and families with additional support/programming needs.

Council also runs a toy library and provides a Family Day Care service where child care is provided in the homes of registered carers, overseen by Council staff. Council also funds the 'Run Around The Block' outdoor recreation program for children aged 5-12 that live in the area.

In addition Council supports a range of community development initiatives in Redfern and Waterloo, and is one of several partners in the Kidspeak recreation afternoon on Waterloo Green, Playgroups in the Park and the Inner City Mobile Play Bus.

Council also supports the Redfern Early Childhood Health Centre, Lois Barker Child Care Centre and the James Cahill Kindergarten through the subsidised accommodation program.



*Redfern Occasional Child Care Centre*



## 4.6 Children and Family Support Services in Redfern-Waterloo

It is acknowledged that a range of community organisations are also involved in a number of important initiatives designed to meet the needs of children and families in Redfern and Waterloo including child care services, pre-schools, Save the Children Inner City Mobile Play Bus, playgroups, support groups for young mothers, school holiday activities, and out of school hours recreation programs.

Some of the main children and family services in the area include Connect Redfern, SDN Children's Services, Murawina Multi-purpose Aboriginal Education Centre, The Factory Community Centre, The Shop Women's and Children's Centre, KU James Cahill Pre-school, the Aboriginal Early Childhood Education Support Unit, S.C.A.R.B.A., the Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service, SDN Child and Family Learning Centres, Centacare, the Girls and Boys Brigade and the Redfern Early Childhood Health Centre.

### Kidspeak

Kidspeak is a family activity program that provides structured and unstructured recreation for 5-12 year olds and parents each Friday afternoon on Waterloo Green. Activities include sports, arts and crafts and skill development as well as support to families. Kidspeak was originally funded by NSW DOCS and Commonwealth FACS and is now primarily funded by the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project via DOCs as part of the Intensive Family Support Service. Council and the Department of Housing also fund a worker to participate in the program. Other support is provided by Connect Redfern.

In July 2003 the agency auspicing Kidspeak transferred from The Factory to Barnardos Australia. This was to ensure ongoing funding to operate Kidspeak via the Intensive Family Support Service. The program is also supported by Council, the Department of Housing, the Factory, Connect Redfern and local children's services providers. There is regular attendance of 30-50 children and their families and bar-be-ques are held regularly as part of the program. The Kidspeak program has highlighted the success of informal and accessible initiatives operating at the neighbourhood level.

The following strategies have been developed with the aim of developing responses that are not just aimed at children and parents but responses that support the community to develop and become a better environment in which to raise children.

Strategy	Who
<b>4.0</b> Continue to conduct the Children and Family Taskforce meetings to improve networks and raise community priorities in the Redfern-Waterloo area.	Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project (RWPP), Council, Department of Community Services, non-government and community organisations.



Strategy	Who
<p><b>4.1</b> Improve and better promote intervention strategies by improving referral practices and interventions in situations where families and children who are at risk.</p>	<p>RWPP, Council, Department of Community Services Redfern Legal Centre, Children and Family services sector</p>
<p><b>4.2</b> Ensure that appropriate support systems are in place at key transition points in life such as on entering pre-school, moving to kindergarten and on to primary and high school.</p>	<p>N.S.W. Attorney General's Department Crime Prevention Division in partnership with RWPP, Connect Redfern and Pathways to Prevention</p>
<p><b>4.3</b> Under the Human Services Review investigate funding opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of models of parenting including the Positive Parenting Program and Parenting Under Pressure through relevant grants programs.</p>	<p>Human Services Review staff, Council, Children and Family Services sector</p>
<p><b>4.4</b> Explore strategies for the provision of more accessible and affordable child care including increasing the number of programs where parents pay low fees for care.</p>	<p>Council, Children and Family Services sector</p>



Strategy	Who
<p><b>4.5</b> Under the Human Services Review investigate funding to run supported play groups to assist families to gain access to services, informal community support and become more familiar with strategies for promoting the development of their children through relevant grants programs.</p>	<p>Human Services Review staff, Council, Children and Family Services sector including the Inner City Mobile Play Bus</p>
<p><b>4.6</b> Implement the Indigenous Support Project at Redfern Occasional Care.</p>	<p>Council</p>
<p><b>4.7</b> Explore more opportunities for community strengthening activities such as Playgroups in the Park, young mother's support groups, school holiday activities, out of school hours recreation programs and the Mobile Play bus.</p>	<p>Council, Children and Family Services sector.</p>
<p><b>4.8</b> Explore ways of better promoting local Children and Family Services in the area including improving linkages between services to promote more effective referral practices.</p>	<p>Council, Children and Family Services sector</p>
<p><b>4.9</b> Under the review of Human Services investigate improving opportunities for holding more free after school and school holiday care programs in the area.</p>	<p>Human Services Review staff</p>



Strategy	Who
<p><b>4.10</b> Establish opportunities for co-location of services and programs with relevant schools and early childhood services to improve access and service co-ordination.</p>	<p>Council, Children and Family Services sector</p>
<p><b>4.11</b> Under the Human Services Review explore ways of expanding the Kidspeak program including holding the program more often, at other venues and linking in older children particularly the 10-12 age group through relevant grants programs.</p>	<p>Council, Children and Family services sector</p>
<p><b>4.12</b> Increase the participation of Aboriginal staff in services supporting the local Aboriginal community.</p>	<p>Council, Children and Family Services sector</p>
<p><b>4.13</b> Explore avenues for more flexible child care services.</p>	<p>Council, Children and Family Services sector.</p>
<p><b>4.14</b> Hold forums which promote networking and co-operation between various child care services on identified priority issues.</p>	<p>Council, Children and Family Services sector</p>



Strategy	Who
<p><b>4.15</b> Explore ways of providing access to literacy and other education and training programs for parents.</p>	<p>Council, Children and Family Services sector</p>
<p><b>4.16</b> Encourage parental participation in the shaping of community events and activities in partnership with early childhood services.</p>	<p>Council, Children and Family services sector.</p>
<p><b>4.17</b> Under the Human Services Review investigate the need for a service offering a safe house for children and young people in Redfern and Waterloo.</p>	<p>Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project, Council, Children and Family Services sector.</p>

