



Child Aware

Family Inclusive Practice



An Organisational Journey

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing,
Community Services and Indigenous Affairs



Ruah Community Services – Organisational Structure.

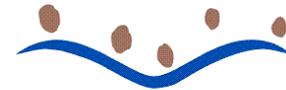
- Members
- Board of Directors
- CEO

- Women's Services, Homelessness & Housing Services
 - Centre & Street to home
 - Anawim
 - Refuge
 - Women's Support Service
 - Ruah Support Service
 - Tenant Support
 - Family & DV Services

- Employment Services
 - Vocational inclusion Project

- Mental Health
 - Inreach: WA Mental Health Commission, Pham's, EEP, Housing
 - Intensive: Housing, Individualised Support
 - Urban Network
 - WRAP and Peer Programs
 - Perspectives on children families & mental health
 - Mental Health Promotion

- Culture & Workforce Development



Ruah Community Services



Ruah
Mental Health

Why Child Aware??

“What is our responsibility to people as parents and to their children?”

- Partnering Families 2002- 2005
- WA Children of Parents with a Mental Illness Initiative 2003- 2006
 - Impact of mental illness on the family- cross sector training
 - Supporting pilot of interagency protocols
- Partnerships with families and other services
- Family Inclusive Policy 2008

Implementing across the whole of Ruah

- Family Inclusive Practice Orientation
- CHILD AWARE Project – 6 months

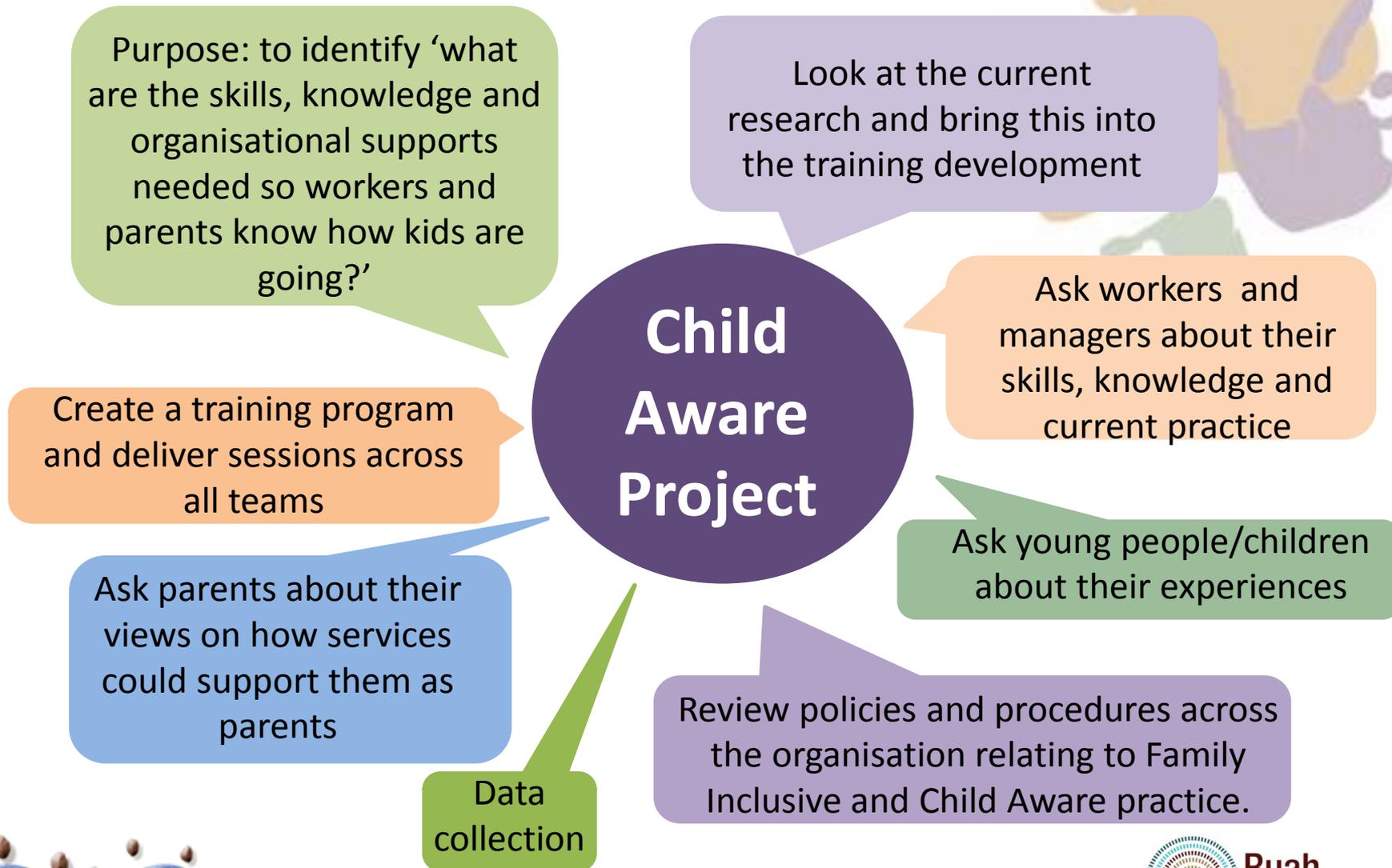
Key question:

“What are the skills, knowledge and organisational supports required so that workers and parents know how children are doing?”

Child Aware Outcomes

- Improve service delivery to the dependent children of adults that access Ruah services
- Improve worker skill and confidence in recognising and responding to the needs of children
- Contribute to the evolving Child Centered Family Inclusive Practice framework

Project Overview



Consultations across the organisation

- Managers and teams
 - Focus on areas of interest and concerns, common themes in the work
- Workers
 - Survey monkey: skills and knowledge, confidence
- Consultation forums, trialing ideas
 - Refining training design, policies, organisational processes



Key themes from organisation consultations

- High numbers of families linked with the Department for Child Protection
- Workers asking for resources for teams and to use with families
- Differences in teams' capacity to work with families
- Duty of care towards children
- Wanting to know how to supporting clients as parents
- How to respond to concerns about a child's wellbeing

Consultations: What Families Say

If the worker is uncomfortable raising this, then I am uncomfortable talking about it.

I hope they get to know me before they start to make judgments.

It helps if workers say upfront that they have an interest in my kids, that it's part of their job.

I want to be seen as a person.

I hope they see what is good about our family and don't just look for problems.



Some workers really don't like DCP, but I haven't had a bad experience with them.

If I'm not comfortable talking about my parenting yet, I want my worker to respect that.

Even though I may resist at the time, I might look back and be glad that the worker took the concern seriously.

Consultations: What Families Say

Workers need only to be able to explore issues and strategies, not to have the answer to problems.

Everybody is sensitive about parenting.

It does help for workers to know about kids from their own experiences, but training in developmental stages is another way for workers to have conversations about a child.

Take any opportunity offered where the person raises concerns themselves, otherwise it might be harder to return later.

I do expect workers to ask me about my kids.

Expect the worker to help the client, which indirectly helps the family.

Judgments about the dynamic between a couple can be wrong and unhelpful, especially here stress is compounding the issue.

A good worker has empathy for the person, is able to take action based on knowledge or finding out what's needed, matter of fact, implying confidence in their capacity and reserves of strength.



Consultations - Young people

What they know about Ruah and why supporting family, purpose, length, other agencies involved

Relationship with Ruah worker, involvement with plans reviews consultation re views thoughts, feelings

What has changed in your family? What has changed for you?

Has anyone asked how you are going? If we were to what would be the best way?

Support for self or parents?

In the future?

Consultations: What Young people Say

Someone comes to talk to Mum weekly to offer support.

This is the first time someone's asked my thoughts

I'm usually in my bedroom when they visit.

I'm usually not around when the worker visits. I'm not ignored by the worker, I'm just not available when she comes (doing my course or other things) and she hasn't made an appointment with me.'

They have groups (Mum's worker talks about a women's group).



They're here for Mum, not me

Mum's confidence has increased gradually and she's going to social things more .

Because Centrelink said it would be good for Mum to talk to someone (she has bipolar).

More confidence and apply for work or study. I would hope they'd be available if Mum has a psychotic episode. I don't know if they've offered Mum "therapy" e.g. To help Mum gain counselling.

Research

Literature review focusing on the impact of adversity on children for service areas across RCS:

- Mental health
- Homelessness and housing
- Domestic and family violence
- Sexual abuse
- Alcohol and other drugs
- Imprisonment

Policies and procedures

- Review identified good examples in some program areas and many gaps on others
 - Complaints process for children and young people
 - Critical incidents - exposure of children
- Created new procedures to address gaps and inconsistencies or uncertainties for workers and incorporated into training
 - Recommends training for supervisors
- Manual in development
- Current whole of organisation policy review

Data collection

- Current data collection system refining
- New 'nodes' being created to collect data consistently about
 - Parental status
 - Children age/ living circumstances/ child protection issues or interest
 - Focus of work around child wellbeing or parenting
- Capacity for analysis of practice changes
 - Completion of family/ child wellbeing plans
 - Changes focus of work
 - Family / child young person review of service

Training Modules



Module 1: Tuning in to Children

Early brain development and the impact of adversity

Module 2: Talking with Parents

Developing practice skills and strategies

Module 3: Child Wellbeing understanding roles and responsibilities

Part A: Finding your way (through the child protection system)

Part B: Tackling child wellbeing practice issues

Identifies issues and introduces new procedures, tools and resources

Training Modules

- Of 170 direct service staff across 2 divisions
- 78 attendees over nine sessions

“It helped to see the bigger picture”

“Very informative and important”

“It consolidated what I can do when working with parents and children”

“I felt that the training as a whole was extremely beneficial”

“Brilliant take home resource guide!”

Outcomes

- Training packages
- Resources and kits
- Tools and forms
- Data collection system
- Beginning family/ children feedback process
- Family Inclusive – Child Aware Practice manual
- Consistent organisational procedures - coming



Opportunities and challenges

Opportunities	Challenges
Early intervention within adult services	Different services – making it relevant for everyone
Developing a family inclusive child aware framework for the organisation	Short time frame – 6 month project
Ability to consult with families and young people	Finding families and young people to interview
Creating data collection and evaluation frameworks	Data collection processes
Involving managers, workers and teams in shaping the training	Competing organisational and team priorities

The next steps forward

- Family Inclusive orientation training 2013 x 3
- Child Aware training in 2013 x 3
- Continue to consult with families and young people
- Policies/procedures
- Post-test survey
- Develop training for supervisors
- New data collection processes – Carelink+



Ruah Child Aware Approaches Project Team

THANK YOU

www.ruah.com.au

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