Young Parents Program

It Takes a Village to Raise a Child: Moving Away from the Crisis Approach

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Child Aware Approaches 2012

- PROMOTION OF YPP’S MODEL
- COLLECTION OF EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE MODEL
- Workshops for young mums and children on attachment and resilience
- Worker training on attachment and resilience
- Individual Outreach
YPP’s MODEL: working in partnership with pregnant and parenting young women and with many other community partners.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS: outcomes include minimal child protection interventions and long term health, wellbeing and community connectedness.

APPLICATION: About YPP, young mums and our services.

About YPP

- 1986 BWHC / RBWH / UQ Social Work student initiative responding to need
- Young pregnant women weren’t accessing antenatal services
- Young mothers unsupported in the community
Welcome to YPP! *Every picture tell a story ...*

OUR VISION: “Young mums... empowered, valued and supported"
**YPP PURPOSE:** To work alongside young pregnant and parenting women to strengthen their inclusion, health and wellbeing as they transition to early parenthood. We work with young women in the context of their children, families and communities.

**YPP VALUES:**

*Participation* ... through accessibility, inclusiveness, equity and social justice

*Relationships* ... that are respectful, nurturing and developmental

*Celebration* ... of women, birth, culture, creativity and diversity

*Sustainability and integrity* ... of the organisation and the work we do

*Responsiveness* ... to the needs and experiences of young parents
YPP Practice Framework Principles

- Strengths based, feminist and social justice principles
- Participation and access
- Developmental and relationship-based approach
- Minimising the expert role
- Celebration and nurturing
- Holistic approach
- Challenging myths & stereotypes
- Creativity and innovation
- Collaboration and Connectedness
- Optimism and Hope
Common challenges or risk factors

- Homelessness (often invisible: couch-surfing, caravans, transience...)
- Overrepresentation in Child Protection system
- Domestic and family violence
- Family and relationship breakdown
- History of sexual abuse
- Challenges for employment and education
- Discrimination and stereotyping
- Isolation and changes to peer groups
- Financial stress
- Mental Health
- Body Image and self esteem
- Smoking, alcohol and other drug use
- Difficulty accessing transport
- Legal issues
Common strengths or protective factors

• Resilient
• Energetic
• Flexible
• Instinctive
• Open to learning
• Playful
• Adaptive
• Creative
• Resourceful
• Spirited
• Loving
• Amazing!
PROMOTION of YPP’s Model

Promotional tools
- Website (pens, postcards etc)
- Published documented Model of Service Delivery
- Published supporting Evidence for Model

Website launched Dec 2012
1453 visits to date
Averages: 4.5 pages, 3.5 minutes, 54% new visits

Australian reach:
- 1000+ Qld
- 249 NSW
- 84 Vic
- 13 ACT, 12 SA & 3 Tas

International reach:
- 15 UK
- 14 USA
- also India, Brazil, Singapore and South Africa

Contact: Referrals, donations, students, volunteers, media
**Promotion of YPP’s MODEL: Why?**

**Young pregnant and parenting women**
- Numbers engaging consistently high
- Feedback from past and present young women consistently positive

**Workers and services across Australia and overseas consulting YPP about our Model of service delivery for 14+ years**
- Replication in new services or programs for Young Mums that are not being accessed
- Recommendation of YPP through reputation as a “best practice” Model in successfully engaging and supporting pregnant and parenting young women.

**YPP’s Model congruent with the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children and the Child Aware Approach initiative.**
- Holistic, innovative, responsive and flexible, strengths and relationships based prevention and early intervention model of support.
- YPP works in partnership with many other individuals and services.
- Effective outcomes with a wide range of young women and issues.
The MODEL

- What does this mean at YPP?
- Why is this important to YPP?
- How do we do this at YPP?

Support & Advocacy

What does this mean at YPP? YPP uses a holistic and developmental approach to support young women, providing a creative, celebratory, nurturing and safe environment. YPP is committed to the full empowerment and valuing of pregnant and parenting young women by working in partnership with young women and the broader community. We provide support to young women in a relationship-based way. Ideally this support is offered to young women in an empowering manner so that their need for support decreases as the time for them to move on from YPP draws closer. Where appropriate YPP will endeavour to link young women to other support services or their community before they leave YPP. We provide support for them as they are learning to parent and to live independently. Based on this belief, YPP also creates opportunities for young women to engage with and develop emotional, social and vocational skills through direct referral, advocacy, community education and action. At YPP young women to develop the skills to problem solve for themselves around issues they face. We engage young women aged from 10 to 25 who is seeking a service. This is usually done in the first instance through direct referral to an appropriate service and may include an immediate response as needed.

Why is this important to YPP? YPP has found through supporting young women that a relationship-based approach supports young women to open up about their issues,知道 appropriate responses. In addition, YPP supports and advocates alongside pregnant and parenting women to provide a safe passage for them through systems that can be illegal, complex and intimidating. Support and advocacy work is integral to YPP as we view support and advocacy to be necessary in our understanding of young pregnant and parenting women in terms of resources available to them.

How do we do this at YPP? Workers aim to empower young women by: 
- providing access to information and resources whilst encouraging them to make their own decisions; 
- providing opportunities for the young women to develop and practice their skills; 
- access to the information and resources that they are seeking; 
- YPP offers direct support and community development opportunities. Group work is the primary method of engagement with workers and other services outreaching into the groups. While young women choose and determine how they engage with YPP. Individual support takes different forms at YPP; outreach; face to face or on the phone, SMS …, Facebook and email. This is the group work model. The face to face or phone outreach model of service that is part of our individual support work allows for relationship-building which is the basis of YPP's work with young women. Through an outreach or 'catch up,' workers meet with the young woman at a place of her choosing, usually at home, a cafe or in hospital. The support offered is both emotional and practical. It can be as simple as providing a friendly face and a willing ear to listen to problems and concerns about the myriad of issues that arise for pregnant and parenting young woman. Support may also entail providing information …
What we do

YP is a place where young pregnant and parenting women can come together to meet other young mums and mums-to-be, to access support and information, and get involved in fun group activities. The service is for young pregnant women who are 19 and under, and young mums who were teens during their first pregnancy and are still under 23. YPP runs a Pregnancy Group for first time mums-to-be as well as Young Mums Groups. Workers also provide individual support around a range of issues and experiences. YPP regularly runs different projects for young pregnant and parenting women as well as creating and participating in opportunities for community education and social action.

Current YPP Services

- For women who are/were under 20 when first pregnant, and still under 23
- 250-300 young women
- Greater Brisbane +++

♥ Pregnancy Group (Childbirth Education)
♥ Young Mums Group 1
♥ Young Mums Group 2

- Individual outreach support and advocacy
- Information and referral
- Under 23 activities
- Additional projects (eg VALUE-ing, CAA)
- Community education and action
Pregnancy Group

- For first time mums 19 and under (usually)
- Facilitated by Social Worker and Childbirth Educator (Midwife)
- Weekly education group
- Youth-appropriate, casual, arty and fun!
- Lunch and transport provided
- Real birth stories from group members
- Partners/mothers/friends/support welcome
- Young Dads Worker (BYS C4YF)
- Education about birth and babies + other topics like housing, law, Centrelink, DV, sexual health, mental health etc
- Peer relationships
- Individual outreach support
“YPP is fantastic. You get so much support and meet so many new friends. Everyone is lovely. Now I have done Pregnancy Group, I wouldn't think of anything better than being young and pregnant and soon to be a Mummy! It's the best feeling and gift”
Fatumata, 22 and 33 weeks pregnant

“It's very helpful... you will meet many people, make new friends, you can share a story and make you feel happy. I know it's not only me now”
“Why we enjoy Pregnancy Group…”

- “It’s just for teenagers so it’s more comfy”
- “Having people in the same situation to talk to”
- “Enjoyable learning, information about labour, different birthing ways, hearing real labour stories”
- “Talking, making friends, getting support”
- “Relaxing, unique, fun, something to do”
- “It prepared me for the most beautiful experience of my life”
- “I’ve had such a good time coming here!”
- “The support, and they don’t judge you”
- “So exciting to have my baby 😊”
Young Mums’ Groups
Young Mums Groups

- YMG 1 – first baby < 12 months old
- YMG 2 – first baby > 12 months old (18mths-2 yrs or 19 yrs old)
- Fortnightly peer support groups
- Relax with babies/kids, each other or participate in activities/info
- Childminding, transport, food provided
- Activities eg baby/kids massage and massage for mums, making playdough with kids, photo-shoots, candle making, other craft
- Info sessions eg money, mums and babies/kids health, housing, study and employment, legal info and parenting supports
- Visiting services and consultants
- Child health nurse
- Sexual health and contraception clinic/info
- Centrelink outreach
- Outings
- Individual support
“YPP is more than just great fun it's an amazing journey that teaches and guides us through the greatest experience in life, Motherhood. I'm proud to be a young mum to my beautiful boy and glad that YPP was part of our journey...”
Shauna, 19 and Mason, 15 weeks

“YPP is amazing for meeting other mums-to-be and getting information to prepare you for the coming weeks of pregnancy and labour. Being a young mum is an amazing experience. I love watching him grow and develop. Every day's a blessing”
Resources

http://www.youngparentsprogram.org.au/resources
Under 23's

- Phone, email support
- Facebook information, referral
- Other activities

Other Activities

- Research, policy consultation, community education, media etc
- Group and individual
- Many different projects
  - VALUEing Young Mums
  - YUMMI
  - YPP’s Healing Garden
  - Celebrating Diversity
  - Child Aware Approaches
Other activities and projects (cont’d)
Other activities and projects (cont’d)
**Other activities and PROJECTS**

**Child Aware Approaches**

1. **Flipside Circus**
   - Children’s circus
   - Experiential learning for young mums
   - Building children’s attachment and resilience

2. **Activities within groups**
   - Sing and Grow
   - Infant Massage
   - Healthy Relationships
3. Growing Stronger Together

- A specialist Resilience program for young parents and children
- YPP partnered with Pathways
- Knowledge and skills for mums for themselves and their children
- Craft activities (resilience cards, handprints)
- Relaxation activities
Evaluation of CAA workshops

Well attended
- 128 young women & 87 babies/children & 6 trained Peer Advocates participated in Sing & Grow, massage and healthy relationships

New skills and knowledge about attachment and resilience for self and child/ren gained and practiced
- Skills/technique (mums resilience): breathing exercises; progressive muscle relaxation; thought awareness; challenging/changing unhelpful thoughts to helpful thoughts; positive thoughts and affirmations; healthy eating; exercise; sleeping tips; self-care; step plans/problem solving
- Skills/techniques (children’s resilience): positive praise; recognising when baby is upset and doing activities to soothe them; descriptive feedback; massage after bath

Positive feedback
- “the looks on their faces of joy & becoming smarter makes you proud”
- “it helps with trust”
- “helped me to realise how important playing is to her- also gives me time out”
- “I learnt about positive thoughts and about the importance of looking after myself”
- “Added onto existing ways I cope. Breathing exercises and importance of self-care. How thoughts affect feelings and how our children pick up on our feelings”
- “Giving him more attention/praise when he reaches a goal or learns something new”
- “Try to understand my child. How to put my child to sleep”
- “By always being positive with them and not saying things like don't do that”
EVIDENCE: What people say

The following evidence demonstrates the short term and long term effectiveness of YPP’s Model

2012 systematic collection of evidence from:
- past and present young women
- YPP workers
- YPP management committee
- YPP supporters

Series of papers developed, “Why YPP works”

Other papers published on YPP’s website:
- “Being a Young Mum” (stories from young women through 3 focus groups about the experience of young pregnancy and parenting)
- “Walking the Talk: What it’s like to work at YPP” (staff retention isn’t a problem at YPP. Written reflections about why workers stay so long.)

All documents available either on website or by email on request
Evidence: “Why YPP works”

“What supporters and staff say about YPP”.
- Quotes and comments that highlight YPP as “best practice” Model in successfully engaging and supporting pregnant and parenting young women from the perspective of workers.

“What past and present young mums say about YPP (Why YPP Works)”.
- 131 ‘young mums’ share their YPP journey.
- Stories and quotes via survey monkey, paper surveys, individual outreaches, within YPP groups, phone calls and drop in to the YPP house.
- **Short version** - qualitative only paper that allows for valuable insight into past and present YPP mums experiences with YPP including the importance of practical and emotional support, learning about pregnancy and parenting, long-term friendships and not being judged.
- **Long version** - available to young women, organisations, funding bodies, etc. via email request on the website. This paper is similar to the paper above in qualitative narrative but also supplies demographics and other quantitative data.
Supporters and staff say …

“… as a worker in a homelessness service working, I see how the support provided … impacts these young women so positively with great outcomes for the present and the future.”

“I work for an Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Organisation. I was asked to be on the MC as a representative for the Indigenous community. This was an easy decision as I was already aware of the great work that YPP does. …”

“...I’m a communications professional and YPP is the exact type of organisation that many spend huge amounts of time and money trying to be.”

“YPP is … such an incredible, positive, hopeful and life changing place for the so many young women …. it was amazing to witness the young women at YPP transform before my eyes into capable, strong, independent young women and mothers ready to face the world.”

“(YPP) provides information and support to ensure a healthy pregnancy and birth. This means that children begin with the best start in life. …”

“… aspiring to have congruence all the way through the organisation. The way we hope the young women will parent their babies, to the way we treat them, to the way we treat each other, to our colleagues in the community and the management.”

“YPP is acutely responsive to these needs, providing an environment where they can relax, feel comfortable, and are therefore more open to learning and sharing … women who are often excluded and stigmatised in society are supported and feel confident to parent to the best of their abilities. Thereby giving the best chance to the next generation and often breaking cycles of disadvantage

“> 18 months, I've seen the great benefits … for young parents. YPP provides a positive a social network + support for young mums, being a strong protective factor for maternal + infant mental health + well-being while young mums are adjusting to parenthood. YPP facilitates peer to peer information sharing, and empowers young parents to access resources + support within the community they may not have known about before. The young mums I speak with commonly report how YPP has helped to boost their confidence as a parent “
What past and present young mums say about YPP

Why YPP Works

Coming to YPP…
• I felt supported
• Helped me believe in myself
• Helped build friendships for me and my children

Words to describe my time with YPP…
• Accepted
• Supported
• Relaxed

Good things about coming to YPP …
• The friendships
• The feeling of connection
• Spending time with my children
• The support
• The learning experiences
• I know I’m not the only pregnant and parenting young person

I would recommend YPP to other young pregnant and parenting women because …
• YPP builds your confidence
• At YPP you meet other young mums
• YPP is supportive
• YPP doesn’t judge
• YPP is fun and free
• YPP connects you with the information you need
• YPP is just for young people

YPP is different because …

Some finishing words of wisdom from past YPP mums 😊
“… we had a support system as we tried to become adults and learn to be parents at the same time.”

“… conversations with other mums that you just can’t have with your other (child-less) friends…”

“The friendships I made were wonderful; some of them are still going 18 years later!”

“the support for my self-esteem enabled me to recognize I didn’t deserve the unhealthy relationship I was in, and have the courage to leave it…”

“I learnt to trust my judgement, for myself, in relationships and as a parent. I recognised that I was stronger than I thought, and embracing my strengths… that my experiences, good AND bad, have shaped who I am today; and learning to love that about myself!”

“when we lost our home and all our possessions in a house fire, YPP were very supportive. But it was not only the support from the workers but also the friendships I had made there that helped me to cope …”

“The most valuable support for a parent, especially a young one!! I’m now in my 30s and still look back very fondly on my time at YPP, and take inspiration for my parenting from things I learned way back then!”

“YPP provides a safe and supportive environment for teenage women where they can learn more life skills and be supported in their journey through the health system as they may have no previous experience with self-advocacy.”

“It is good to meet other women who are pregnant and get out of the house. When you are pregnant you can end up with anti natal depression that most likely is caused when alone and bored and unable to do things…”
“I really enjoyed the activities that engaged my son like the sing-a-long day.”

“I attended YPP over 20 years ago … I have very positive memories and best remember feeling very supported and not judged in anyway”

“Learning about- what my body was going through, what to expect for birth, what my baby will look like, first few weeks, feeding, sids, information about other services that may be of assistance if I needed it, story’s from other real mums.... that’s what I can remember from 6 years ago.”

“Now a teacher, I am keen that the young women I teach finish their education. I have already recommended YPP to one student .... I know that the staff at YPP will care for the young woman, encourage her in her education and in her parenting and make her feel successful no matter what she chooses to do.”

“To know there were other people in my situation - with different backgrounds, in different relationships etc. I felt very lonely and ashamed, this was a safe place for me - where I didn't feel judged... where people weren't staring at me, or asking me ‘aren't you a bit young to be having a baby.’“

“Fun, loving and informative… I was single and very scared and depressed and YPP really helped me.”

“I would recommend YPP to all young pregnant women, because pre-natal classes at the hospitals are really intimidating when your young, unmarried and completely clueless about babies. I felt like such an idiot going to the hospital, but going to pregnancy classes at YPP made me feel so much better about my-self as a parent.”

“I was only 19 years old, a single mum of 2 boys under the ages of 2yrs, I had no money, no car and my so called boyfriend would not do anything to help me or our boys, if ... didn’t come and pick me up to go to court, I would have been in big trouble. Taking me for hospital appointments or other important things and just letting me talk was the best support I’ve had in my life.”
“I was really poor when first coming so the free lunches were great…”

“for the specialist support - pregnancy can be very emotional and difficult, especially when you are still at school or have limited family support or no partner.”

“all young women need a support centre like this, in a time where you are scared, unsure and going through something extraordinary.”

“The friends I made, … I am still really close to more than ten years down the track. At YPP we were encouraged to discuss successes and failures which I think made us better parents then. I know for sure that I am a better parent to my teenager now when I share my problems with other 'old girls' and we discuss the new parenting challenges that come with raising teens.”

“Being a young parent is hard. Being a young parent with social issues (lack of support, DV, financial....) is harder. YPP helps with a broad range of issues facing young families.”

“I made wonderful friendships with other young mothers, and these friendships still continue 12 years later!”

“When I was first approached by a YPP worker I was a frightened 16 year old girl with no family support, living in transitional housing with no idea how I was going to be a mother. YPP helped me find proper housing and to use services available to me. I gained confidence … the workers supported me … to leave a domestic violence situation. The first couple of years with my child were tough and at time very rocky but YPP helped me become the mother I wanted to be. Today. I am a strong, happy, healthy, positive mother and a fantastic role model for my children.”

“…I am a better feminist because of YPP I am a better teacher because of YPP I am a better mother because of YPP Thank-you.”
Final Words From Pregnant and Parenting Young Women

Top 10 things young women find helpful from their workers

1. Smiling
2. Introducing yourself
3. Giving some quality time
4. Listening to us and treating us respectfully
5. Providing positive comments (like ‘you’re doing really well’, ‘you can do this’, ‘you’re a great mum’, ‘s/he is a beautiful baby’)
6. Offering help and letting us know it’s OK to ask for help (because sometimes we’re too shy to ask)
7. Understanding that our lives might be chaotic at times (no money for fares, nowhere stable to live etc)
8. Explaining choices (for informed decision-making with procedures etc)
9. Offering support for referral to other services (and sometimes even offering to make the first phone call together – check first)
10. Getting to know you

❤️ We respect you and know that you can really help us and our babies
Thank you

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www.youngparentsprogram.org.au