Partnerships in Early Childhood: Building strong relationships within the early years sector for improved child aware practices

Child Aware Approaches Conference, 18-19 May 2015, Melbourne

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The Benevolent Society

• We help families and children to thrive
• We help older people to age well
• We help people take care of their mental health and wellbeing
• We provide learning and education to individuals and organisations
• We work in partnership with communities so they build on their strengths and use their own resources
• We advocate and speak out for a just society
Overview of the Partnerships In Early Childhood Service Model

• Theory
• Objectives
• Implementation
• Core Components

Evaluation Results

• Lessons from implementation
• Outcomes for staff, children & families
Overview of the Partnerships in Early Childhoods Service Model
High Quality Childcare can provide an opportunity for the traumatised infant to form relationships with others in a way that fosters trust, consistency, and predictability, although for the childcare educator to do this they must be supported, (C.Ebert., S.Watson., & R., Dolby ,2008).

The PIEC model is based on research showing that high quality interventions focusing on the secure relationships between educators and children are linked to improved outcomes for children with multiple risk factors.

The PIEC theory of change is that building staff capacity and encouraging them to think about child behaviour in terms of social and emotional need will lead to staff being more predictable and emotionally available.
Program Objectives

- Promote children’s healthy emotional and social development
- Contribute to improved outcomes for children through early intervention
- Increase social and community connections
- Improve family relationships
- To develop information and resources for parents, professionals and communities

Child and families

- Increase the expertise of early childhood staff working with families with complex needs
- Improve the quality of children’s early learning experiences

Early Childhood Staff

- Increase the expertise of early childhood staff working with families with complex needs
- Improve the quality of children’s early learning experiences

Early Childhood Sector

- To build the Australian evidence-based about what works in prevention and early intervention in early childhood
- Develop centre-based children’s services as community hubs that are safe, non-threatening places to support vulnerable children
Service Delivery

Pre implementation engagement

Year 1 & 2
Training Modules
Modeling & Coaching

Consultation
Optional 3rd year

- 1 PIEC worker per centre employed by lead agency
- Program can be delivered internally or externally
- 2-3 visits per week, 3-5 hours per visit
- Training modules
- Modeling & Coaching
- Time off the floor
Training Modules

Intro and overview
- Introduction to all aspects of the PIEC program including aims, philosophy and intended outcomes. Also covers roles and the implementation process.

Attachment and children’s relationship needs
- Introduction to attachment and development theory, the role of an early childhood setting. Introduction to the Circle of Security, practices and approaches to developing attachment and Playspaces practice.

Emotional development and reflective practice
- Developing capacity for reflective practice, focusing on staff recognition of their emotional responses together with the introduction of an intervention framework exploring children’s behaviour from an emotional needs perspective.

Assisting vulnerable families through reflective practice
- Assisting vulnerable children with their relationship needs by introducing the concept of detours from the Circle of Security and interventions to respond to these. Further information on reflective practice through the introduction of ‘shark music.

Children’s social development
- Introduction to social development theory. Supporting children’s social and emotional development through elements of Marte Meo such as naming workers’ and children’s initiatives and supporting children’s co-operative play.
Playspaces’ and ‘Circle of Security’

- Primarily used during pick up and drop off times
- Element of predictability for children, allowing them to experience a ‘secure base’ and ‘safe haven’ from which they can engage with the environment and other people

Marte Meo

- Focus on critically examining the relationships between adults and children
- Intervention component – following the child’s lead, naming the initiative
- Analysis component – video reflections
Evaluation of Partnerships in Early Childhood
1. What have been the main facilitators and barriers to implementing PIEC in South Australia and what are the implications for future roll out?

2. To what extent has PIEC increased the expertise, competence and confidence of early childhood education staff, working with families with complex needs?

3. To what extent has PIEC contributed to improved outcomes for children and families?
Methodology

- 32 child surveys (May - June 2014)
- 18 caregiver surveys (May - June 2014)
- 22 staff surveys (June 2014)
- PIEC worker, centre directors, centre leadership and 13 centre staff interviewed
- Follow up data collection April - June 2015
Interim Results - Staff
"I think it's opened up your eyes up a bit more as a staff member, making you look at thing a bit differently, like working out if there's a reason behind why this child comes in and is crying every time they come in or the child is crying for a reason. So I think, yeah, it opens, just widens your focus a little bit more of trying to get in touch with, okay, why are you unsettled? Why are you not emotionally connecting with a group of children or things like that?" (Centre Staff)
I have increased the time I spend communicating with children and families

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<th>Neutral</th>
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I have more positive conversations with families

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My knowledge of connecting with children and families in vulnerable circumstances has increased

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I feel my centre is providing a higher quality of service to children and families

I have increased knowledge of the services I can refer children and families

My expertise working with complex families has increased

I am better able to promote healthy social & emotional development

A have a greater understanding of children social & emotional development
Circle of Security (map) ®
I've found the meetings afterhours with the PIEC worker really interesting. The one that I found the most interesting was the Circle of Security, so where you are as an educator on the Circle of Security and recognising it, where the children are in your room and how to approach that and work on that with the children. I found the building the attachments and the developing relationships and that part of the system useful” (Centre Staff)

Playspaces TM
Yeah, so they'd have their own little play space. When they'd come in, they'd go straight to that table where someone was with them. Normally it was me as their primary worker. They'd come and sit at our table which made it a bit easier for the parents to drop them off, because before we had to usually pry them off. You'd get kicked and scratched and all that sort of thing. So I found that part of the program worked really well” (Centre Staff)
Marte Mao
“"I think the film had a big impact. This little boy, who was a biter, and I just filmed him for three minutes. He must've tried to interact with every single worker, he tried to interact with children, and he was basically just ignored, ignored the whole time. In the end they were all like….no wonder he bites. They weren't aware that he was just wandering around. He tried so many times to interact and he didn't, so in the end this kid bit everyone.” (PIEC worker)

Naming the initiative / Naming the child’s initiative
“So the PIEC worker helped us come up with a plan and naming initiatives so that he would now maybe understand what was happening in the room so that he wouldn't feel insecure. So he developed a security in his new environment and developing a bond with his educators by naming issues. Oh, I'm going to have a drink now. Mary has the train tracks. Would you like to put it on the track that Tom made or - do you know what I mean? Yeah, he appears a lot more confident in his environment and a lot happier” (Centre Staff)
Children’s relationships with other children have improved
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<tr>
<td>Children have healthier attachments with centre staff</td>
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<td>Children’s relationships with other children have improved</td>
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<td>Children are more physically and emotionally safe</td>
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<td>Children are better able to self regulate their emotions</td>
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<td>Children’s behavioural problems have decreased</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>Children’s relationships with their families have improved</td>
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<td>Children are better able to control their attention, impulses, emotions and behaviors in an appropriate way</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>Children have more empathy towards others</td>
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<td>Children have more secure and stable relationships with their families and caregivers</td>
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<td>Children feel more competent and in control of their own circumstances</td>
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One in four children rated as borderline/abnormal on peer problems

Half of children displaying normal prosocial behaviours

One in four children rated as borderline/abnormal on Total Difficulties score
One in ten children rated as borderline on emotional symptoms score

One in three children rated as borderline/abnormal on conduct problems score

One in five children rated as borderline/abnormal on hyperactivity / inattention score
Interim Results - Families
Caregiver Parenting Skills

Parents/caregivers are less quick to judge children’s behaviour

Parent/Caregivers are better able to respond to the emotions children are conveying through their behaviour

Parents/Caregivers confidence in their parenting skills has increased
Caregivers are satisfied with the quality of care at the centre
- Disagree: 4
- Neutral: 18
- Agree: 1

There has been an increase in families' involvement in my centre
- Disagree: 1
- Neutral: 6
- Agree: 13

There has been an increase in referrals from my centre to other services
- Disagree: 7
- Neutral: 14
- Agree: 1

Caregivers are more aware of other support services
- Disagree: 1
- Neutral: 6
- Agree: 14
Next Steps

Follow up child data collected in April 2015

Follow up interview, focus group and staff survey collected June 2015

Summary report in June 2015
Thank you!

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