Application of the Evidence on Home Visiting across South Australia

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Outline:

- Importance of the early years.
- Developing a statewide evidence-based early years initiative in South Australia.
- Lessons about the wide-scale application of the evidence.
Importance of the early years

- The evidence is clear that nutrition and experience in the early years of a child’s life influence the infant’s brain development.
Despite occasional rhetorical interest in wider determinants of health, evidence based assessments are largely restricted to individualised interventions.

(Smith, Ebrahim and Frankel. Editorial. BMJ 2001; 322: 184-5.)
FIGURE A  Benefit-cost ratio for ECD programs


Every Chance for Every Child in South Australia
Background

- Generational Health Review (April 2003)
- Child Protection Review (May 2003)
Every Chance for Every Child is about achieving improved health, developmental, educational and social outcomes for children in South Australia, using strategies that work on the best available evidence.
Every Chance for Every Child initiative is focused on four key program areas:

- Provision of effective support for parents of infants and young children.
- Provision of effective early learning opportunities for young children.
- Helping communities to be more supportive of families.
- Better assisting families who may need additional support.
Intent was that *Every Chance for Every Child* would be:

- population – focussed
- evidence – based
- preventative and proactive.
The challenge ...

"The challenge is to promote uptake of innovations that have been shown to be effective, to delay spread of those that have not yet been shown to be effective, and to prevent uptake of ineffective innovations."

(Haines & Donald, 2002)
Building a population-level ECD initiative in South Australia - Home visiting.
“Achieving ‘real-world’ success with prevention and early intervention programs is difficult; therefore, close attention must be paid to quality control and adherence to original program designs. *Successful prevention strategies require more effort than just picking the right program.*”

Program:

- Starts with Universal Contact.
- Standardised assessment of need (Pathways to Parenting).
- All potentially eligible families go to Case Review.
- Non-eligible clients referred to mainstream services.
Entry Criteria for Family Home Visiting - Automatic

- Teenage mother.
- Child identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- Mother socially isolated.
- Mother expresses poor attribution towards child.
Entry Criteria for Family Home Visiting - Considered at Case Review

- Current or past treatment for mental health issue.
- Domestic violence.
- Drug and alcohol related issues.
- Intervention from CYFS.
- Child born with congenital abnormalities.
- Other nurse concerns.
Details of Family Home Visiting:

- 34 visits over 2 years
- 6 x weekly visits
- 12 x fortnightly visits
- 16 x monthly visits
- Program built around parent and child needs.
Family Home Visiting
– content of visits:

• Proactive – eg safety, health information, immunisation, literacy, infant behaviour.

• Anticipatory guidance – eg developmental information, suggestions for play, child care, hygiene, prevention of infection.

• Management of existing issues – eg information and support for financial, housing and legal issues, social connections, personal relationships, referral to local services.
Key considerations for implementation:

- Ensuring the right service is delivered:
  - Review role of nurses and nurse practice.
  - Need for additional training of nurses.
  - Develop multidisciplinary support for nurses.
- Keeping track of information.
- Broad consultations around new service.
- Developing culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal families and children, and other specific populations.
What has been achieved?
(by March 2006)
Universal Contact:

- Fully rolled out across SA – 17,500 babies.
- Virtually complete enrolment by CYH of birth cohort – up from 85% in 2002.
- Established links in place with most birthing hospitals in SA.
- Use of *Pathways to Parenting* assessment of family needs and development of accompanying explanatory guide.
Family Home Visiting – rollout:

- Visits commenced in outer northern and southern metropolitan regions in April 2004.
- Visits commenced in Riverland in July 2004.
- Visits in Port Augusta/Whyalla commenced in November 2004.
Family Home Visiting – rollout:

- Additional funding to extend service to further suburbs in south and north-eastern Adelaide and to Gawler in July 2005.
- Premier announced completion of rollout to remainder of eligible families in South Australia over the next four years in March 2006.
Family Home Visiting - statistics
By December 2005

- Over 997 families have accepted Family Home Visiting.
- 20.4% of families who have accepted the program have an Aboriginal infant.
- 6 - 7% of these families the service not appropriate and referrals to other more appropriate services.
- 12% of families chose not to continue (eg moved to another area) leaving an overall retention rate of 81% after 12 months.