

9. CHILDREN AT RISK COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT RR 9647

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The purpose of this report is to inform the Board of the developments of the Children at Risk Community Development Project.

At the July 1998 Board meeting \$31,710 was allocated to the Royal NZ Plunket Society to undertake the Children at Risk Community Development Project (see 'Education – Local Issues' Report in the attachments). The objective of this project was:

“To support and strengthen the families of the Spreydon-Heathcote wards to become more involved and actively participate in their community. The Project will use a community development process with the associated strategies working towards community safety from crime, improving health standards and encouraging education.”

The project began on 3 August 1998 with the Royal NZ Plunket Society employing a Community Development worker.

PROJECT PROGRESS

Over the past 6 months the Community Development worker has:

- visited and compiled a comprehensive social service agency inventory
- prepared leaflets for parents and health professionals
- contacted all General Practitioners in the Spreydon-Heathcote ward
- written a number of media releases
- obtained the services of an outside supervisor from the Crown Health Unit
- made contact with a Post Graduate Education student at Canterbury University interested in evaluating the project
- formed a small parent support group.

The end of the six month period is a crucial time where the ground work has been laid and the Community Development Worker awaits a response from the community. Given that a small parent support group had been formed before the end of the six month period, which indicates the project was beginning to achieve the desired outcomes.

However, due to health reasons the Community Development Worker resigned on 12 March. Subsequently, Jill Sinclair, Plunket South Area Manager, approached staff with an alternative way of continuing the project (refer attachments for Plunket Proposal). Because this option does not incorporate a community development approach, which the Board strongly advocated for in the projects initial stages, an additional option has been prepared by staff.

OPTIONS TO CONTINUE THE PROJECT

Both options would have to be undertaken within the constraints of the remaining budget (see attachments).

PLUNKET PROPOSAL

Use the remainder of Board funds to provide an enhanced Plunket service to high need families. The aim would be to provide additional care and support and education to families in the area who are vulnerable to poor outcomes. This would be an enhanced component to the already established home visiting programme.

Gill Sinclair indicated she would be reluctant to offer this to a Plunket nurse for 6 months only, as clients would need a minimum of one year of contact in the programme for there to be any long lasting benefits.

Advantages

- The project would continue to be aimed at early intervention and prevention which was identified as the most effective response to dealing with 'at risk children' as identified by the Board's research;
- The programme would be offered through an established and recognised agency;
- The Plunket Society is in an ideal position to be in contact with nearly all new born babies and their family/parent/caregiver, and hence identify possible 'at risk' factors.

Disadvantages

- The programme may not reach the 'at risk' group who tend not to access "official social services/agencies"
- The envisaged community development approach would not be utilised.
- Much of what has been done in the last 6 months would be wasted.

STAFF PROPOSAL

The project in its original form be contracted to Manuka Cottage/Addington Community House. Manuka Cottage staff expressed a strong interest in the project and believe the project is a good philosophical match with the aims and objectives of Manuka Cottage.

Advantages

- The Community Development Project would complement work already being done by staff at Manuka Cottage;
- Being based at Manuka Cottage would offer the Community Development Worker the opportunity for peer support, guidance and supervision in their particular field of expertise;
- A potential outside professional evaluation of the community development project as performed by a post graduate student from Canterbury University would give a clear indication of the merits of the programme and possible ways to proceed and develop the project;
- The programme in its original form may enable the Community Development Worker to reach the 'at risk' group who tend not to access "official social services/agencies". (Early intervention and prevention

programmes in relation to At Risk families were the priorities identified by the Board's research.)

Disadvantages

- Revisiting agencies previously contacted to inform them of the changes;
- Duplicating setting up costs.

Recommendation: That the Board indicate their preference for continuing the project.