

EarlyEd early childhood intervention mobile playgroup



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Why an early childhood intervention mobile playgroup?

The issues:

- Waiting list for services in Auburn / Holroyd
- Data suggest that there is often late recognition and misrecognition of disabilities in families from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds (Alcorso, 2003).



Auburn demographics

- Population: 68,104
- 7.6% aged between 0 and 4
- 53.2% born overseas
- From more than 100 countries of origin
- > 66.2% speak a language other than English at home
- The five most common languages Arabic (11.1%), Cantonese (10.1%), Turkish (6.7%), Mandarin (6.6%), and Korean (3%)
- Religious diversity - Islam, with 24.8%, Catholic (19.7%), Buddhism (9.2%), Anglican (5.2%) and Hinduism (3.1%).

The solution:

- Families NSW funded a specialised early childhood intervention service to pilot three mobile, supported playgroups to provide interim support for families.
- Staffed by early childhood special educator, speech pathologist, physiotherapist and language support worker
- 2 hr weekly sessions during school terms at 3 venues in Auburn / Holroyd



Early challenges

- Finding an appropriate and safe venue
- Targetting CALD communities
- Promoting playgroup without 'disability' stigma
- Embracing all cultures in playgroup activities to promote a sense of belonging

Targetting CALD communities

- Waiting lists
- Preschools & childcare centres
- Community organisations
- Auburn Migrant Resource Centre
- Auburn Council Children's Services
- On the street
- Flyer



Language Support Workers

- Local knowledge – from the area
- Greeting families on arrival
- Interacting positively with families
- Supporting staff and families through accurate interpreting
- Educating staff about culturally sensitive issues
- Assisting with gaining culturally appropriate resources



Creating a Sense of Belonging

- ‘Who is here today?’ pictures
- Posters of children & parents in playgroup
- Culturally engaging resources
- Parental involvement
- Developing friendships within the group
- Language support worker



Empowering families

- Knowledge - how to facilitate development
- Giving families control
 - positive strategies to manage their child
 - making families aware of their options
- Creating a network of support within the group



Playgroup evaluation by
Associate Professor Christine Johnston, UWS

1. Are there positive developmental outcomes for children?

85% of parents/carers stated their child had improved in speech, social skills, participation and concentration.

The reasons they saw for this were the *“very good teaching method and improvements in their own parenting skills”*.

“He has started to play better . . . the first time he’s not on anything. Now he can. It’s all good.”

“At first she couldn’t sit for five minutes. The teacher taught us how to train her.”

2. Do parents/carers have increased parenting skills?

Three parents (14%) listed Parenting Skills learnt as what they liked best about the playgroup.

“I was able to gain first hand information/advice. There seemed a genuine and sincere desire to assist my child.”

“I have been taught some parenting skills. I have the opportunity to learn. I like the activities, singing and dancing. I want my child to have the opportunity to join in.”

3. Is referral to appropriate further services facilitated?

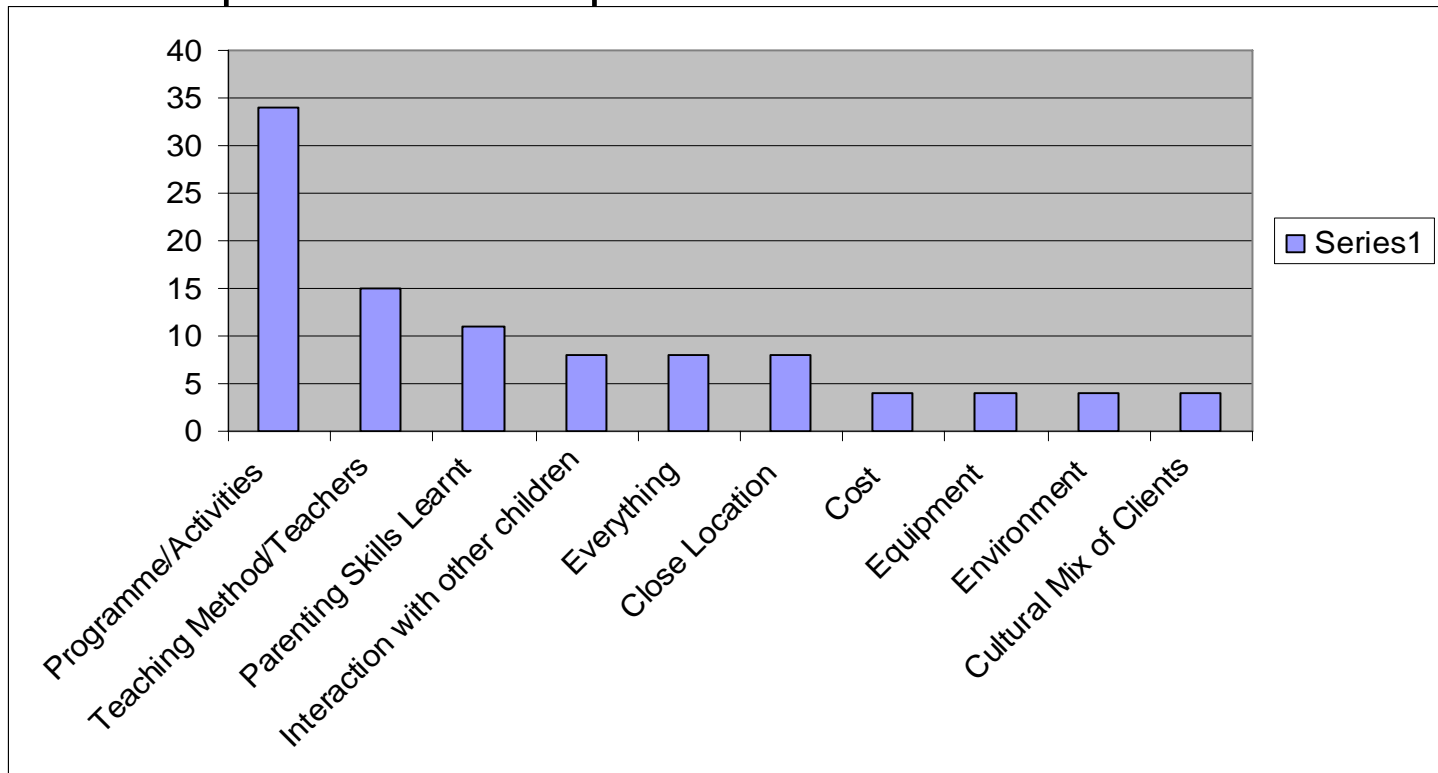
Four of the 21 (19%) participants in the intensive study group have been referred to services. Without the mobile playgroup the remaining 17 children (81%) would have received no special education and therapy throughout 2006. However, tracking families after they stop attending playgroup is not possible and so some families may have moved into specialised services without staff knowing.

“I am very grateful to have found a high quality environment with caring staff for my child.”

“Everything I like. Teachers are good. Environment is also good neat and clean. I feel my daughter is lucky to get admission here.”

4. Do parents / carers see the playgroups as meeting their needs whilst waiting for more specialised services?

100% responded to this question



Parents were also prompted to offer shortcomings and areas for improvement. 59% of parents/carers offered a comment for improvement, whilst 41% did not.

The categories for improvement included:

- More sessions per week,
- Provision of transport,
- More staff,
- More and varied equipment and including Outdoor Play in the Programme.

“Perhaps parents of the different cultures might read some stories in their own language if the numbers in the group make it feasible.”

*“If you can provide more days in the week then we would feel more happy.”
“. . . and if possible transportation. My child is scared on the train as there’s plenty of strangers and he gets frightened. I worry he will catch the flu when it’s raining.”*

Ongoing challenges

- Irregular attendance
- Late arrivals
- Lack of child supervision
- Parent participation
- Enough staff
- Outdoor area
- Transport



Strengths

- Peer support – mothers working with other children
- Other mothers talking about their experiences
- Practical support at transition times within group
- Info sharing eg about paediatrician, assessments etc
- ECIA Awareness Week award for innovative practices in the field of early childhood intervention
- Fun for staff!!

