

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of this land on which we are meeting.

We would like to pay our respects to Tasmanian Aboriginal elders and to welcome any other people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities to this place.

Purpose of presentation

In this interactive workshop we will explore with participants':

- ideas about inclusion;
- facilitators and barriers to inclusion;
- stories of successful inclusion; and
- the role of the Inclusion Support Agency.

Participants will be encouraged to share their experiences, knowledge and understandings of caring for children with diverse needs and skills and to reflect together on their practices.

Outline

- Share findings from our research projects
- The meanings of inclusion
 - Inclusion as a process
 - Inclusive FDC environments
 - ISA supporting FDC
- Schemes, carers and ISFs working collaboratively
- Moving forward

Purpose of research study

- **Concern raised by ISA manager:**
 - low incidence of 'requests for support' for ISA from FDC schemes
 - 3% of children in FDC (28,933: 2004 Child Care Census) have a disability
 - SDN ISA fewer than 1% were accessing ISS
- **Purpose to investigate:**
 - the low rate of requests for support from FDC schemes in SDN ISA's three regions;
 - low utilisation of ISS in FDC in our regions; and
 - ways that SDN ISA could support FDC services capacity to include children with OHSN.

Theoretical background

- Potential benefits of FDC for children with OGHSN
 - Home environment / mixed-age / small group / family-grouping / regular carer
 - = consistent, individualised, responsive care
 - = supports relationships with families
 - Benefits for 'other' children in care
 - carers' increased skills are transferred
 - children's increased appreciation of 'difference'
 - Carers' increased confidence and self-esteem
(Saunders, Long & Morris, no date)

Potential reasons why FDC not using the ISA

- Lack of awareness of SDN ISA
- Children's disabilities not being identified
 - CDO / carers' qualifications
 - Carers' intentionality
 - CDO / carers' support
- Families with children with OGHSN not accessing FDC
 - FDC not well known
 - FDC 'poor cousin' of children's services
 - Concerns about single carer
- Children with OGHSN being excluded from FDC
 - CDO / carers' qualifications
 - Carers' intentionality
 - Carers' support

Research Questions

RQ1: Are FDC schemes in the three SDN ISA regions aware of the:

- shift to ISP?
- role of SDN ISA? and
- role of the ISF?

RQ2: Are children with disabilities accessing FDC schemes in our regions?

RQ3: What factors support and inhibit the inclusion of children with OHSN in FDC?

RQ4: What support can SDN ISA provide to increase the capacity of FDC schemes to include children with OHSN?

	Activity	Participants	
Stage one	Initial contact	17 schemes	
Stage two	Initial visit	12 schemes	
Stage three	CDO interview	12 schemes (12 co-ordinators 27 CDOs)	
Stage four	Carer interview	9 schemes	Playgroup 35
		55 carers	Telephone 3
			Focus group 6
			Postal 6
			Individual int 4
Stage five	Initial analysis of findings and reflection on project	2 researchers 5 ISFs	

Barriers to Including Children with Disabilities in FDC

- **CDOs' and carers' negative beliefs about:**
 - disability, children's rights to inclusive environments and the appropriateness of FDC for children with disabilities;
- **Coordinators' doubts and/or concerns about:**
 - the capacity of carers to include children with disabilities;
 - that caring for children with disabilities will have a negative effect on carers' wellbeing or income;
- **CDOs' concerns about their own capacity to support carers;**
- **Carers' physical capacity; fears and anxieties; or the FDC home's suitability for children with disabilities**
- **Carers' concerns that:**
 - including a child with disabilities will have a negative effect on 'other' children in care;
 - 'other' children's families might leave their care if they take on a child with disabilities.

Facilitators of Including Children with Disabilities in FDC

- **CDOs' and carers' positive beliefs about:**
 - disability, children's rights to inclusive environments and the appropriateness of FDC for children with disabilities;
- **Coordinators' positive perspectives – they are the gatekeepers;**
- **CDOs confidence in their ability to support carers;**
- **Carers' physical capacity; capacity & willingness to modify their FDC environment;**
- **Carers having:**
 - previous positive experiences of caring for children with disabilities;
 - a relationship with a child prior to diagnosis;
 - support from other carers in the scheme;
 - support from the scheme – including strategies for working with children with disabilities;
 - support from the carer's own family; and
 - financial compensation for loss of income, and knowledge about the availability of this funding.

Discussion

- **Found a number of facilitators and barriers to the inclusion of children with OGHSN in FDC**
 - these inform our practice by making us aware of some factors unique to the FDC care environment
- **Research process valuable for increasing ISF contact with FDC**
 - an area of 'expertise'
 - led to increased number of requests for support & AIRP
- **Tensions identified:**
 - coordination unit are the gatekeepers
 - maternalism
 - Who do ISFs work with: *coordination unit and / or carers?*

What is an Inclusion Support Agency?

Inclusion Support Agencies (ISAs) are funded by the Australian Government as part of the Inclusion and Professional Support Program.

There are 67 ISA regions in Australia. Each regional sponsor employs Inclusion Support Facilitators (ISFs) who work with child care services.

ISAs are funded to build the capacity of eligible child care services to include children from the following groups:

- Children from culturally & linguistically diverse backgrounds including refugee children;
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children
- Children with ongoing high support needs including children with a disability

What 'tools' do ISFs use?

- Service Support Plans: document planning for the inclusion of a specific child or group of children
- Bi-Cultural Support Pool
- Inclusion Support Subsidy: funding to support cares who include children with disabilities who have ongoing high support needs
- Assisted Inclusion Readiness Planning (AIR planning)

Inclusion

Access to and participation of all children, including those with high ongoing support needs, in the child care environment. This includes children with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, Australian South Sea Islander children and children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, including humanitarian refugee Children.

DEEWR, Office of Early Childhood Education and Child Care, 2008

“Inclusion is a
process
of identifying,
understanding and
breaking down the
barriers to
participation
and belonging.”

National Children's Bureau (UK) Early Childhood Forum,
2003

Inclusion as a process

- Valuing children, families and workers
- Policies positively respond to diversity that are translated to everyday practices
- Access support

Inclusion as a process

- Identifying
- Understanding
- Breaking down barriers
- Participation
- Belonging

Inclusion Support Facilitators

- Support carers to provide an inclusive care environment for all children and for children requiring additional support
- Provide access to a range of practical supports and assistance
- Assist in linking with relevant community groups, services and organisations
- Support to work in partnership with families and local support networks
- Assist in identifying their professional development needs and opportunities
- Support to engage in ongoing reflective practices and continuous improvement.
- Adapted from DEEWR, Office of Early Childhood Education and Child Care, 2008

Inclusive child care environments:

- Work in partnership with families and their extended networks
- Build on the strengths of the child care community (child, family, staff and community)
- Use flexible programming approaches that are responsive to individual strengths, interests and needs
- Respect and respond to families' cultural values, needs and circumstances
- Provide welcoming and engaging environments that are responsive to all children and their families
- Create links through networking with other relevant services and supports

DEEWR, Office of Early Childhood Education and Child Care, 2008

Rukhsana

- Carer from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background
- 7 children over the week, 5 children each day
- 5 children are new in the environment
- All children are from CALD background and with limited English language skills
- 6 of those children are Sudanese, possibly from refugee background and 1 child from Indian background
- Age range from 6 months to 3 years
- Carer expressed her concerns about a 3 year old child

Service Support Plan

Service Identified needs	Service Identified Goal	Step Implemented to date to address the identified need	Range of capacity building opportunities available to address the identified need	Action Plan
<p>The carer requires assistance to access a range of practical supports for a child with diverse abilities</p>	<p>The carer implements a flexible program that fosters the learning of all children and specifically the child with diverse abilities</p>	<p>The carer approaches the child, to obtain his attention and then guides him to become involved in experiences</p> <p>The carer supports the child with his self-help skills such as feeding, hand washing and nappy changing</p>	<p>The carer works in partnership with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -the family to exchange information and have an assessment done - the CDO and the family to access support from relevant professionals - the CDO and the Inclusion Support Facilitator (ISF) to assist the carer in developing strategies to support the inclusion of all children and for the child requiring additional support 	<p>The carer communicates with the family on a regular basis to exchange information</p> <p>The carer and the CDO provide the family contact for assessment</p> <p>The carer obtains information from the professionals involved with the child, e.g. speech therapist, and incorporates this in her program</p> <p>The carer accesses information and support from the ISF to provide an inclusive environment</p>

What supported Rukhsana to be inclusive?

- Carer - was able to recognise there was something 'different' about the child – she was experienced – knew 'typical' behaviour
- Scheme – acted on carers' concerns; processes in place; coordinator was knowledgeable about the ISA and the support it provided
- ISF – worked collaboratively with carer and cdo to work through a plan of action
 - Strategies
 - Information
 - Materials
 - Professional support

What is Assisted Inclusion Readiness Planning?

- Assisted Inclusion Readiness Planning (AIR planning) is a process where child care service staff and the ISF work together to explore ways that services can be inclusive of all children.
- AIR planning usually includes an on-site facilitated planning session.
- The process leads to the development of a plan that documents how the service is already inclusive of all children, areas that the service would like to work on, current capacity to make changes and resources and support that may be needed.

Assisted Inclusion Readiness Plan

Service Identified needs	Service Identified Goal	Step Implemented to date to address the identified need	Range of capacity building opportunities available to address the identified need	Action Plan
<p>The coordination unit needs to support carers who have strategic language needs.</p>	<p>All carers feel empowered and they are supported to communicate.</p> <p>All carers access QA information in their relevant language.</p>	<p>The coordination unit has contacted the ISA.</p> <p>The coordination unit has been referred to the Bicultural Support Pool.</p>	<p>The coordination unit will visit the carer with a Bicultural Support Worker who speaks a specific language.</p> <p>Juani & Fernanda to meet to discuss all the concerning issues and points to be addressed.</p>	<p>Fernanda (CDO) and Juani (Coordinator) to make an appointment with the carer and Bicultural Support Worker.</p> <p>Coordination unit and the ISF to look at training and also review current training calendars.</p>

Assisted Inclusion Readiness Plan

Service Identified needs	Service Identified Goal	Step Implemented to date to address the identified need	Range of capacity building opportunities available to address the identified need	Action Plan
<p>The Coordination unit needs to support carers through the QA process based on the individual needs.</p>	<p>All carers have an overall understanding of all QA principles and they are able to demonstrate their willingness to achieve high quality provision of care.</p>	<p>The coordination unit has had discussions about the scheme and identified the areas that require more work and individuals that require more support.</p>	<p>The coordination unit to continue discussing the areas and carers that require more support and continue providing it.</p> <p>The Inclusion Support Facilitator will support the coordination unit to identify training needs.</p>	<p>Inclusion Support Facilitator to present information to carers about the Inclusion Support Agency and ISF.</p> <p>ISF and CDO to visit carers with children with diverse abilities to offer support and discuss funding options if needed.</p>

Assisted Inclusion Readiness Plan

Service Identified needs	Service Identified Goal	Step Implemented to date to address the identified need	Range of capacity building opportunities available to address the identified need	Action Plan
<p>The carers need more knowledge and skills to be able to identify children with diverse abilities</p>	<p>All carers have the skills to identify children who require additional support.</p> <p>All carers have knowledge that allows them to ask for additional support.</p>		<p>All carers are aware of procedures when supporting children with different abilities.</p> <p>All carers have knowledge of early intervention agencies.</p>	<p>The ISF will help the coordination unit to liaise with the Bicultural Support Pool to support specific needs within the program.</p>

Moving forward

Access the Professional Support Co-ordinator in your state and territory for:

- Professional development and training
- Bicultural support
- resources
- Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS)
- Specialist equipment
- Indigenous Professional Support Unity (IPSU)
- Quality assurance (NCAC)
- General information

Moving forward

- Work in collaboration with ISAs
- Build on carer's capacities to be inclusive
- Extend knowledge about diversity, inclusion
- Revise policies and procedures
- Access resources from various sources
- Work in a coordinated approach with all stake holders
- Carers mentoring
- Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

References

- Early Childhood Forum (2003) *Participation and belonging in early years settings: Inclusion. Working towards equality*. National Children's Bureau, UK.
- Inclusion and Professional Support Program Handbook, Office of Early Childhood Education and Child Care. December 2008. DEEWR
- Sandie Wong & Tamara Cumming (2008). *Breaking down the barriers: An investigation into the factors that impact upon the successful inclusion of children with disabilities in Family day care*. SDN Children's Services, Inc
- www.deewr.gov.au