



# Enhancing Responses to Children in Refuge



**Save the Children**

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# Enhancing Responses to Children in Refuge



## Background

- 2016: 6 month pilot project, funded by DET
- Support for Young Children (0-8) Affected by Domestic and Family Violence

## Purpose:

- To enhance and embed trauma informed child focused practice amongst professionals working in DFV Refuges in Brisbane



## Enhancing Responses to Children in Refuge



### Objectives

- Raise awareness of the impacts of Domestic and Family Violence on young children
- Implement and review initiatives that respond to the needs of children
- Improve the learning, social and emotional development outcomes
- Enhance and support the healthy functioning of parent/child relationships
- Support families to access high quality and culturally welcoming early childhood education
- Promote collaboration between DFV services and agencies working with young children





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### Design

- Refuges were invited to participate through an EOI
- 4 Refuges chose to respond and participate

The three stages:

- Stage 1 – Training
- Stage 2 – Support and Delivery
- Stage 3 – Resourcing and Review



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## Stage 1 – Training

Training topics included:

- Positive Discipline for Everyday Parenting
- Impact of Trauma on Children and Young People
- Facilitating Supported Playgroups and the Importance of Play

With an emphasis on attachment, circle of security and enhancing child/caregiver relationship



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### Stage 2 – Support and Delivery

- Week 1: Playgroup
- Week 2: Reflection and Planning meeting
- Shift from 100% STCA lead to 100% refuge lead
- Provide physical resources as well as a handbook/resource folder with key concepts from the training, meetings and onsite learnings

### Transfer of Responsibility

SCA Staff

Participating Refuge

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### Stage 3 – Resourcing and Review

- Reflection meeting at the conclusion of the project
- Providing a resource kit
- Developing a handbook

#### Opportunities for SCA

- Reflective practice
- Consolidated learning from two program areas into one cohesive framework



*“play doesn’t mean having expensive things. It’s about the quality of the interaction, not the price of the toy”*  
*(Participant)*

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### Outputs and Outcomes:

#### Outputs

- 18 playgroups were held in which children attended (out of a potential 40)
- 7 meetings, out of a possible 9 were held

#### Outcomes:

- 86% average score from the "Impact of DFV on Children" quiz
- 100% of participants were able to identify the benefits of play based learning AND that physical punishment is not congruent with Positive Discipline
- 80% were able to identify the impacts of DFV on children AND the consequences of using violence to discipline



*"I have seen a huge improvement in the development of children that have attended group, even for such a short time"  
(Refuge participant)*



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### Outcome: Change of Mindset

- Children as clients in their own right
- Looking at the service through the eyes of a child
- Knowledge and understanding of the children and young people accessing the service
- Fundamental principals of playgroups in place
- Child Rights



**I tried to teach my child with books.**

**He gave me only puzzled looks.**

**I used clear words to discipline,**

**But I never seemed to win.**

**Despairingly, I turned aside.**

**“How shall I reach this child?” I cried.**

**Into my hand he put the key:**

**“Come,” he said, “Play with me.”**

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## Learnings

- Playgroups have benefits, but are not the only or best way
- There is a gap in services and interventions for young people
- Positive outcomes require a whole team approach.
- Opportunity for SCA and other refuge staff to learn from each other and gain skills
- Learnings from different schools of thought applied in real world refuge context



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### Conclusions:

- Significant positive results correlated with:
  - Time spent on site
  - Regular contact with staff
  - Participation in reflection and planning activities
- Challenges were encountered through:
  - Lack of clarity about the nature and intent of the program
  - Infrequent opportunities to spend time on site
  - Infrequent attendance at meetings
  - Introducing structured programming in a crisis environment



Overall, this project was successful in enhancing child focused practice within participating refuges, with a focus on ensuring sustained change through training, support and resourcing

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## Next Steps

- 2017 program and key messages for everyday work with young children in refuge
- 12 months to support 20 refuges across QLD
- Wider catchment (SEQ, NQ and the Gulf Region)
- Focus on key messages from playgroups and trainings





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**THANK YOU**



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