

Evaluation of the Supporting Parents - Developing Children Project

Interim Report
Year two of three

December 2013



December 2013

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Supporting Parents - Developing Children: A focus on Literacy, Language, and Learning is a three year project that aims to connect culturally and linguistically diverse families with early years learning and provide opportunities for training and employment for parents. The objectives of the Supporting Parents - Developing Children (SP-DC) project are to:

- Increase participation of culturally and linguistically diverse families in innovative early years development and engagement programs and services focused on literacy, language, and learning.
- Foster social cohesion through the engagement of culturally and linguistically diverse families in early years service programs.
- Build a partnership approach to strengthening social cohesion in southern Hume.
- Create training and learning pathways for culturally and linguistically diverse parents and carers participating in programs in southern Hume City.

Supporting Parents - Developing Children is comprised of the following four programs:

- Mother and Child English Language Program
- Bilingual Storytime
- Playgroup Enhancement
- Early Years Hubs.

In addition, the four programs are supported by a multi-disciplinary team comprised of an Occupational Therapist and a Speech Pathologist, who work with families and groups across the four program areas.

The evaluation

The evaluation focused on measuring the achievements and processes by which the Supporting Parents - Developing Children project has been effective in:

- Increasing participation of culturally and linguistically diverse families in early years development and engagement programs.
- Fostering social cohesion through the engagement of culturally and linguistically diverse families in early years service programs.
- Creating training and learning pathways for culturally and linguistically diverse families.

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach, utilising quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure depth and breadth of responses. This interim report contains the findings of the 2013 data collection, which involved a survey of parents who attend either a facilitated playgroup or a Mother Child English Language Program class, focus groups with playgroup facilitators and bilingual storytellers and case study interviews with three parents who attend one of the SP-DC programs. Preliminary evaluation findings were presented at two stakeholder workshops and feedback was received and incorporated into this report.

Ethics approval for this evaluation was sought and granted through The Royal Children's Hospital Human Research Ethics Committee, in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

Key findings

Participation

The evaluation found that SP-DC was successful in increasing the participation of culturally and linguistically diverse mothers of young children in southern Hume in early years services. Parents reported that they made use of SP-DC programs, as well as accessing a range of other services for children and families both within the early years hubs and beyond them. The premise which underpins the focus on increasing participation is that it leads to improved outcomes for parents and children and this is borne out by the evaluation findings. Child development/readiness for school scores increased for both children in the pre-school age cohort (4-5 year olds) and in the babies and toddlers cohort (0-3 year olds).

In addition focus group data indicate that the importance of participation is well understood by the project workers and that effort is made to ensure that the SP-DC programs welcome parents and encourage their participation. Case study data indicate the importance of participation in playgroup and the value of the support provided by the multidisciplinary team in enhancing the participation of parents of children with additional needs and the critical role of spreading awareness of normal child development, services available and the importance of early learning and early intervention.

Social Cohesion

The evaluation used a composite scale to assess levels of social cohesion amongst parent respondents. The social cohesion scale assessed a number of measures of belonging, connectedness and sense of community, and indicated that parents' sense of social cohesion improved during the course of the year. A key finding was a statistically significant increase in the way parents felt about the neighbourhood as a place to bring up

children. This suggests that the programs of SP-DC have a positive impact on both parents sense of connectedness to their local neighbourhood and their confidence in raising their children. Other measures on this scale showed smaller, but consistently upwards trajectories with one exception. This exception was parent's self-reported sense of confidence in using the English language to communicate, which showed a significant decline over the course of the year. Qualitative data collected in case study interviews, focus groups and the survey indicate that parents felt their English language skills had improved due to their participation in SP-DC, suggesting that their decreasing confidence in using English may relate more to an increased understanding of the intricacies of the English language and a more accurate understanding of their own abilities. The evaluation did not objectively measure parents' English language skills.

Training pathways

Case study data give a very clear picture of one participant's journey through SP-DC from newly arrived refugee to qualified and employed child care worker, over the course of three years. Focus group responses from project workers also highlight the importance of the articulation of training, volunteering and employment pathways within and beyond SP-DC. The survey data collected over the course of one year show little change in parents' training and employment status; however, it is likely that the short time frame covered by this evaluation is sufficient to effectively measure movement through training, education and employment. Additional administrative data has been included in this report to demonstrate the role of training pathways amongst parents who participated in SP-DC but were not included in the survey.

Satisfaction

Finally, parents were asked at the end of the year about their level of satisfaction with the SP-DC program they attended. Two scales were developed to measure parents' satisfaction with both the program activities and the help they received from the program. Overall satisfaction on both scales was very high with mean scores of 4.4 and 4.3 respectively on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being completely satisfied.

INTRODUCTION

This is the second interim report of the Supporting Parents - Developing Children (SP-DC) project evaluation undertaken by The Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) Education Institute. The report details findings from a comprehensive program evaluation of the 2nd year of the SP-DC program conducted from February through to December 2013.

The evaluation team was made up of researchers from The RCH Education Institute. The team collected evaluation data from key program services users (parents and carers) as well as from program facilitators, coordinators and other project stakeholders using both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

This report provides a comprehensive summary of evaluation data collection results from the second year of the evaluation, as well as a detailed discussion of the key findings. A review of relevant literature and a detailed report on the findings of the first year of the evaluation may be found in the first interim project report (2012). In addition, some administrative data provided by the City of Hume has been included to indicate the complete range of programs which make up the SP-DC project and to demonstrate the involvement of parents in SP-DC training pathways.

SUPPORTING PARENTS – DEVELOPING CHILDREN PROJECT

Supporting Parents - Developing Children: A focus on Literacy, Language, and Learning is a three year project that aims to connect culturally and linguistically diverse families with early years learning and provide opportunities for training and employment for parents. The objectives of the Supporting Parents - Developing Children project are to:

- Increase participation of culturally and linguistically diverse families in innovative early years development and engagement programs and services focused on literacy, language, and learning.
- Foster social cohesion through the engagement of culturally and linguistically diverse families in early years service programs.
- Build a partnership approach to strengthening social cohesion in southern Hume.
- Create training and learning pathways for culturally and linguistically diverse parents and carers participating in southern Hume City.

As objective 3 is being assessed in a separate evaluation, our evaluation will focus on measuring the achievements and processes by which the project has been effective in:

- Increasing participation of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) families in early years development and engagement programs.
- Fostering social cohesion through the engagement of CALD families in early years service programs.

- Creating training and learning pathways for CALD families.

The SP-DC project is coordinated by Hume City Council and funded by:

- The Scanlon Foundation
- Australian Government
 - Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations
 - Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
 - Department of Human Services (CRS)
 - Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Adult Migrant English Program)
- Victorian Government
 - Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
 - Department of Premier and Cabinet
 - Victorian Multicultural Commission.

Supporting Parents - Developing Children is comprised of the following four programs:

1. Mother and Child English Language Program
2. Bilingual Storytime
3. Playgroup Enhancement
4. Early Years Hubs.

All four programs in the Supporting Parents-Developing Children project take place in southern Hume. Southern Hume is an area within the Hume City Council region of northern metropolitan Victoria, Australia and includes the suburbs of Broadmeadows, Campbellfield, Coolaroo, Dallas, Jacana, and Meadow Heights.

METHODOLOGY

The following section outlines the evaluation questions which guided the evaluation methodology and the data collection approach.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation focused on measuring the achievements and processes by which the Supporting Parents - Developing Children project has been effective in:

- Increasing participation of culturally and linguistically diverse families in early years development and engagement programs.
- Fostering social cohesion through the engagement of culturally and linguistically diverse families in early years service programs.
- Creating training and learning pathways for culturally and linguistically diverse families.

EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODS

A number of quantitative and qualitative research methods (detailed below) were used to collect evaluation data from program participants and program stakeholders during the evaluation period. An overview of the SP-DC evaluation methods and respondents is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Evaluation participants and data collection methods

Data collection method	Participant group	Number of participants
Survey	Parents	First round: 63 Second round: 27 continuing participants 12 non-continuing participants
Focus groups	Program workers (Playgroup facilitators and Bilingual storytellers)	14
Case study interviews	Parents	3
Feedback workshops	Project stakeholders	6 (one workshop)
	Program workers	31 (one workshop)

SURVEY

In order to improve the quality of the data collected from parent participants in 2013 as compared to 2012, a revised survey methodology was implemented. The survey was designed to be administered in two parts, first to new parents entering the project early in 2013 and again 8-9 months later. The reason for this was to track parent progress across the three project aims of participation, social cohesion and training pathways over the course of the year. The first round of the survey involved the recruitment of 63 parents who were new to the project in term one 2013. These parents completed an extensive questionnaire with a researcher and an interpreter if necessary during their playgroup or Mother and Child English Language Program (MCELP) class. These parents were also asked to provide their contact details in order to assist with follow up at the end of the year.

In term 4, the second round of the survey was conducted. Of the initial 62 parents who participated in the survey, 30 were still attending in term 4. Twenty seven of these completed the follow up questionnaire at this time. Three were reported still to be attending but were not present when the researchers attended the group. The other thirty two were no longer attending a SP-DC playgroup or English class. Up to three attempts were made to follow up with these participants either in person or by telephone, to complete a short questionnaire designed to elicit the reasons for which participants chose not to continue attending. Twelve participants were able to be contacted this way and completed the short questionnaire. The remaining twenty participants were not able to be contacted.

FOCUS GROUPS

Supporting Parents-Developing Children Project workers include the hubs workers, playgroup facilitators, bilingual storytellers and the members of the multi-disciplinary team. This year the playgroup facilitators and bilingual storytellers who are employed in the project participated in the evaluation through a focus group which was conducted towards the end of third term. The focus group aimed to build on existing evidence about the ways in which the project workers perceive the SP-DC project to be meeting its explicit aims, as well as to reveal their perceptions of the barriers and enablers to effective project implementation. Project workers who participated in the evaluation were very articulate about the benefits of the project for families, children and communities across the three project aims of participation, social cohesion and training pathways.

CASE STUDY INTERVIEWS

Three case study interviews were conducted in 2013. These interviews were conducted one on one by a member of the research team, with parent participants in SP-DC who were selected by SP-DC staff. The parents were identified by project staff as having a rich and interesting story to tell about their arrival and settlement in Australia and their involvement in the SP-DC project. The three women selected all had different cultural backgrounds, and had been involved in different aspects of SP-DC over time, including playgroup participation, Mother Child English Language Program, playgroup facilitator training and working as a playgroup facilitator. The three case studies have been written up individually, to draw out particular aspects of the SP-DC project which are highlighted by the women's diverse engagement with the project opportunities.

WORKSHOPS

Two opportunities for project staff and stakeholders to provide feedback on the evaluation were provided at the end of term 4. The first of these was the Local Hume Governance Committee meeting held at Hume City Council on December 12th 2013. The second was the end of year get together for hub coordinators, playgroup facilitators and bilingual storytellers, held on December 17th 2013 at Youth Central in Broadmeadows. Feedback from participants in these two workshops has been incorporated into this report.

DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative data collected through the two rounds of the survey was entered using the REDCap online survey software and then exported and analysed using STATA. Qualitative data were manually coded and thematically analysed according to the project research questions and themes of participation, social cohesion and training pathways. The case studies were analysed according to one of the above themes and each case study is written up individually below.

ETHICS

Ethics approval for this evaluation was sought and granted through The Royal Children's Hospital Human Research Ethics Committee, in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

PROGRAMS OF THE SP-DC

The Supporting Parents - Developing Children project is comprised of four separate but intrinsically linked programs. The individual programs have evolved over a number of years and underpin the delivery of SP-DC services to culturally and linguistically diverse families with young children in the Hume community.

MOTHER AND CHILD ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAM (MCELP)

The MCELP program has been developed over the past six years as a program in which mothers and children from CALD families can learn English together in a community setting. The program combines the English as a Second Language (ESL) course for parents and carers as well as providing childcare and a joint mother and child playgroup.

The ESL curriculum is structured around topics that support child development, is delivered within the Certificates in Spoken and Written English (CSWE) curriculum, and enables participants to achieve learning outcomes at appropriate levels of the CSWE. This curriculum framework is flexible and will allow for further customisation to strengthen the child development and mother /child engagement focus of the program.

The playgroup component includes a period where children attend playgroup while their parent or carers, typically their mother, attends the ESL program. At the completion of the ESL session, carers join their child for the remainder of the playgroup session. Children and parents engage in a shared learning program, where a focus is on early childhood development and the further development language and literacy skills through play and social interaction.

In 2013, there were five MCELP programs running as part of SP-DC. Four of these programs were conducted in SP-DC funded Early Years Hubs while the fifth was conducted at the Broadmeadows Leisure Centre. Forty four adults enrolled in a MCELP program in 2013, and they brought fifty five children with them to attend playgroup.

ENHANCED PLAYGROUP PROGRAM

Enhanced playgroups provide additional services and support to parents, carers, children and families from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds. The playgroup programs are facilitated by bilingual staff and aim to make it easier for mothers and children to come together in a safe setting where children and carers can come together to play and learn.

In addition to normal playgroup activities, the facilitated playgroups aim to provide opportunities for social connectedness by providing links for parents and carers to local services and to the wider community. The CALD facilitated playgroups typically run in the early years hubs and currently include playgroups facilitated in a range of community languages including Arabic, Assyrian/Chaldean and Nepali.

Playgroups contribute a vital role in strengthening positive family relationships, promoting and facilitating engagement of families with others in their community and creating linkages with community service providers. They are well-recognised as a way of linking newly arrived, socially isolated or marginalised families to the community, early years services and primary schools. An important component of this program is the engagement of community members in training to become bilingual workers and to support the delivery of playgroup programs across southern Hume.

In 2013, there were thirteen facilitated playgroups conducted on a weekly basis under the auspices of SP-DC. Four of these playgroups were multicultural and open access, while nine were language or culture specific. The language groups supported in these playgroups were Arabic, Assyrian/Chaldean, Turkish and Nepali (Bhutanese). In the first six months of 2013 (January to June) 176 adults and 215 children attended these playgroups on a minimum of three occasions.

EARLY YEARS HUBS

Early years hubs are usually placed at the local primary school and provide programs and services for toddlers and pre-school aged children and their parents and carers. The hubs are linked to the wider school, neighbourhood kindergartens and other local service agencies. The hub model is viewed as an innovative and effective way to increase social cohesion in their neighbourhoods.

The hubs often have bilingual staff and CALD support staff on hand to provide assistance. They provide a range of services including playgroup programs, courses and information sessions targeted to their local communities. There are many established 'hubs' in the Hume community and new hubs are regularly being established. Six new hubs have been established in local primary schools as part of the SP-DC program. This includes hubs at: Meadow Heights, Campbellfield Heights, Bethal, Broadmeadows Valley, Holy Child and St Dominic's Primary Schools. SP-DC also supports three existing early years hubs, located at Coolaroo South, Meadows and Dallas Brooks Community Primary Schools.

Services which hubs provide vary quite considerably between different hubs, and include services run by the hubs, such as the SP-DC facilitated playgroups, as well as being a venue for external agencies to deliver services such as dental care. The services delivered by different hubs range from early years programs, computer clubs, breakfast clubs, speech pathology, English language classes, financial literacy courses, family support groups, community kitchens and visits by the Maternal and Child Health Nurse. Hub workers are also actively providing information to families to improve their knowledge of services and opportunities and

making referrals to outside services such as employment agencies, where appropriate. At present the SP-DC hubs are hosted by primary schools with the support of school principals and other staff. In the first six months of 2013, in addition to the parents who attended SP-DC auspiced playgroups (reported above), 121 adults and 144 children attended other playgroups operating in the hubs. A further 242 parents and 443 children attended an early years program in a hub, such as Mother Goose, Tumbling Stories, Occupational Therapist and Speech Therapist sessions, 3 year old activity group and Storysacks, while 283 parents and 47 children attended social support programs in the hubs, such as Zumba (physical activity class), Community Kitchens, Saver Plus (Brotherhood of Saint Laurence financial management), and family support group (Melbourne City Mission). The homework clubs were attended by 132 children, while breakfast clubs served 171 children and 290 children participated in kids cooking classes. Ninety parents attended computer classes.

BILINGUAL STORYTIME

The bilingual storytime program was established in 2005 and offers sessions at Hume libraries and a number of community settings including childcare centres, pre-schools, playgroups and schools. The program is provided in several languages including Arabic, Turkish, Vietnamese, Assyrian and Singhalese and encourages interaction between parents and children through literacy and learning activities.

Songs and stories are told in both English and the first language of the group. Storytime sessions are aimed at assisting children from linguistically diverse backgrounds to develop good language and to help facilitate the transition to kinder and school. Sessions are run by trained storytellers who use a range of bilingual resources including LOTE books, songs and craft activities.

Bilingual storytellers are central to Hume's literacy program and play an important role in providing community information and building relationships with CALD families. In addition the program also provides learning and training pathways for parents and carers. The pathways provide a series of stepping stones into greater confidence, social connectedness, participation and opportunity.

In 2013 there were nine bilingual storytime sessions run each fortnight as part of SP-DC, in conjunction with the facilitated playgroups. Total attendance across the nine sessions averaged 129 adults and 170 children, or approximately 14 adults per session and 18 children. The languages of the bilingual storytimes are: Arabic, Assyrian/Chaldean, Vietnamese and Turkish.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM

In addition to the four programs, a multidisciplinary team consisting of a Speech Pathologist and Occupational Therapist is working across all four programs, while a Hubs Project Worker is currently providing support to the Early Years Hub development component of the program.

Table 2. Evaluation of the Supporting Parents-Developing Children Project: Funded programs 2013

Location	Early Years Hub	Playgroup Enhancement	Bilingual Storytime	MCELP
Bethal Primary School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total enrolment 212 students 74% LOTE background 65% bottom socio-economic quartile 	Yes	Multicultural		Program established
Broadmeadows Valley Primary School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total enrolment 263 students 62% LOTE background 	Yes	Multicultural (2 sessions)		
Campbellfield Heights Primary School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total enrolment 189 students 98% LOTE background 71% bottom socio-economic quartile 	Yes	Arabic	Arabic	Program established
Holy Child Primary School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total enrolment 338 students 92% LOTE background 77% bottom socio-economic quartile 	Yes	Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac	Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac	Program established
Meadow Heights Primary School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total enrolment 627 students 91% LOTE background 64% bottom socio-economic quartile 	Yes	Arabic	Arabic	
St Dominic's Catholic Primary School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total enrolment 202 students 90% LOTE background 55% bottom socio-economic quartile 	Yes	Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac	Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac	
Meadows Primary School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total enrolment 300 students 75% LOTE background 71% bottom socio-economic quartile 	Yes			
Dallas Brooks Community Primary School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total enrolment 490 students 94% LOTE background 64% bottom socio-economic quartile 	Yes	Multicultural (Turkish)		
Broadmeadows Leisure Centre				Program established
BroadInsight Group		Bhutanese	Bhutanese	
Ilim College		Turkish and Arabic	Turkish and Arabic	
Coolaroo South Primary School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total Enrolment 298 students 79% LOTE 73% bottom socio-economic quartile 	Yes	Multicultural	Turkish	

EVALUATION FINDINGS

This section discusses the pertinent findings of research with project stakeholders:

- Parents and carers (both those who completed a full year and those who did not complete a full year of the program)
- Project workers (playgroup facilitators, Hub workers, multidisciplinary team)

The findings of the quantitative research with parents and carers is presented first, followed by the qualitative findings from the survey and the parent case studies. This is followed by the findings of the qualitative research using focus group methodology with project workers. In each case the findings are grouped by the themes of participation, social cohesion and training pathways in line with the evaluation objectives. In addition, parents who participated in the survey were asked to rate their satisfaction with the program which they attended and these findings are also included.

Indented text is used throughout to identify the voice of respondents.

PARENTS AND CARERS FINDINGS

SURVEY

The main data collection tool utilised in 2013 was a pre- and post-survey which was administered by a researcher (with an interpreter where necessary) face to face with parents and carers in their usual playgroup or English class setting. The pre-survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete and answers were entered online directly using REDCap survey software. The post-survey also took approximately 20 minutes to complete, being essentially the same questionnaire as the pre-survey, but with the addition of some questions about satisfaction with the program. The findings of the two rounds of the survey are discussed here. A copy of the survey questions may be found at Appendix 1.

Participation

The survey was only administered to parents who began attending an SP-DC program in 2013, either a facilitated playgroup or a MCELP class. Questions were also asked about parents' participation in other early years services such as the Maternal Child Health Service, kindergarten, Early Years Hubs and childcare/crèche. Parents were asked a series of questions about their need for services plus their ability to access services.

Overall parents were able to access the services they needed for their children in the early years. At baseline (pre-survey), 40 parents (70% of respondents) reported that they needed to access the Maternal and Child

Health (MCH) service while 17 parents (30%) reported that they did not need to use the MCH service. At follow up (post-survey) 20 parents (83%), reported that they needed to access the MCH service while four parents (17%) reported that they did not need to use the MCH service. At both time points all of the parents (100%) who needed to use the MCH service were able to access the service.

At baseline, 15 parents (30%) reported that they needed access to childcare/crèche and 14 of these were able to access it. Only one parent was unable to access childcare/crèche when needed. At follow-up the responses were similar. Thirty percent of respondents needed childcare/ crèche and all but one of these were able to access it. Similarly with preschool/kindergarten, at baseline fifteen parents (30%) needed access to preschool/kindergarten, and thirteen of them were able to access it. Two parents reported that they needed kindergarten for their child but were not able to access it. At follow up, however, only two parents (10%) reported needing preschool/kindergarten and both of these reported that they were able to access a place. It is likely that these findings indicate that parents of kindergarten aged children were less likely to remain in the program over the course of the year, possibly as their children found places in kindergarten or other pre-school programs.

At baseline ten percent of parents (n=5) reported that they needed to access a Speech Therapist, of whom four were able to get access and one was not able to get access. At follow up the percentage of parents needing access to speech therapy for their child had increased to 15%, perhaps indicating an increased awareness of the need for early intervention when a child's speech is delayed. All of these parents were able to access the speech therapy service which they needed.

Thirty six percent of parents at baseline (n=20) reported that they needed access to a hospital or specialist medical clinic for their child, and all of these reported that they had been able to get access to that service. At follow up a higher percentage of parents reported needing access to a hospital or specialist medical clinic (45%, n=10), and again, all of these parents were able to access the service which they needed.

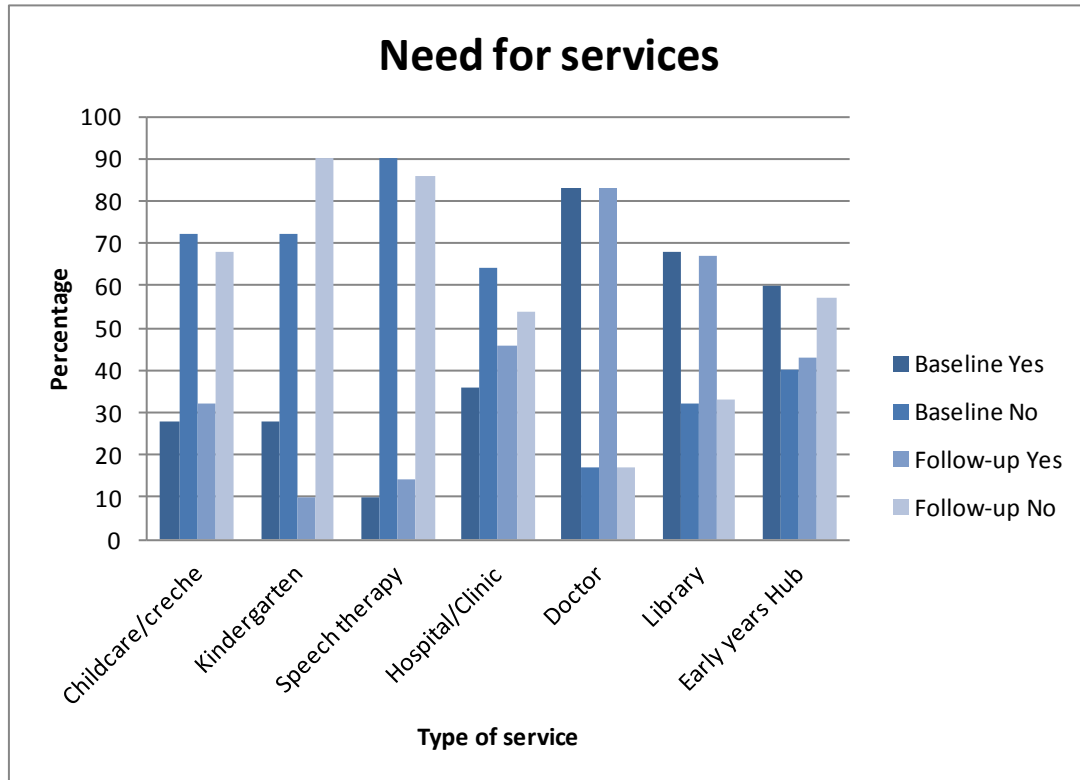
Nearly all parents (83%) both at baseline and at follow up, reported that they needed access to a general practitioner for their child. All of these parents were able to get access to a general practitioner when they needed it at both time points.

Thirty nine parents (68%) at baseline indicated that they needed access to a library, and all but one said they were able to access the library. A similar percentage at follow up (66%) reported needing access to a library and at this time point all parents who needed it were able to access the library.

At baseline 36 parents (60%) reported needing access to programs running in the Early Years Hubs. All of these parents reported being able to access such programs. At follow up the percentage needing access to early years hubs had fallen to forty three percent (n=10), and again all these parents were able to access early years hubs services (see Figure 1). It is possible that this apparent decrease in need over the two time points reflects parents making use of early years hubs programs early in the year, before moving on to other programs or

services offered more generally in the community.

Figure 1 Need for services



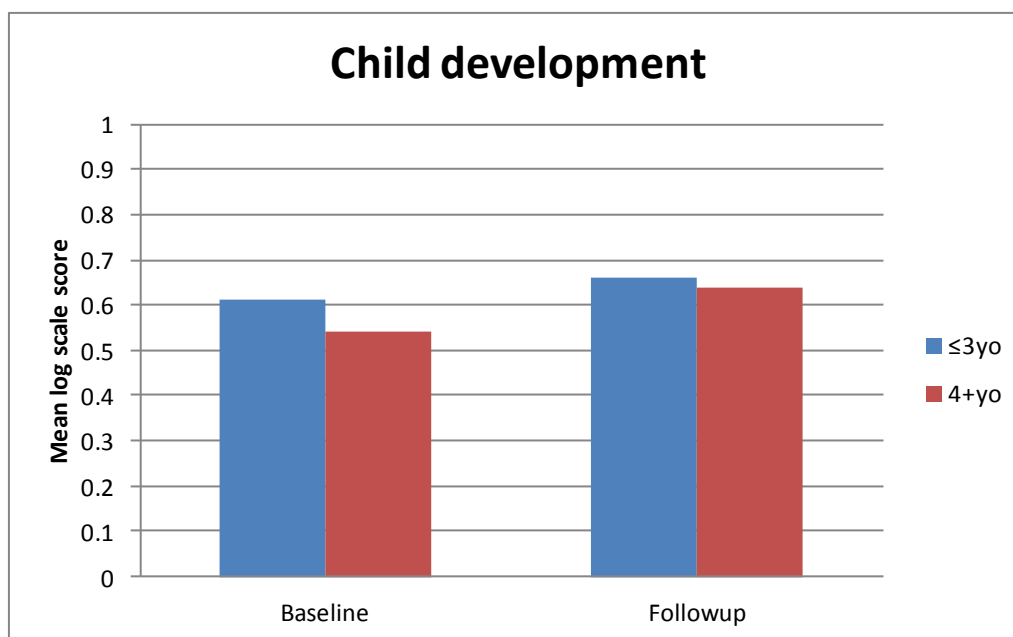
As well as the above questions the survey asked parents more specifically about whether their child was attending a kindergarten program. At baseline twenty five parents reported having a three year old child, of whom seven (28%) were attending kindergarten. Of these twenty five parents with a three year old child at baseline, eight were still attending at follow up (30%). But, of these eight, none reported that their child attended a kindergarten program. It appears that those parents whose children were attending kindergarten at the beginning of the year were more likely to stop attending playgroup than those whose children were not attending kindergarten, possibly due to a perceived duplication of the two programs or suggesting that parents recognised the importance of social play and interaction for their three year old child regardless of whether it occurred at kindergarten or playgroup.

Also at baseline, twenty four parents reported that they had a four (n=11) or five (n=13) year old child. Of the four and five year olds, nine (38%) were attending kindergarten and fifteen (62%) were not going to kindergarten. These findings were similar at follow-up (31% attending and 69% not attending). It is probable that these figures are an under-representation of kindergarten attendance, as there is both an expanding range of early years programs for pre-school aged children and they are known by different names. This means that some children may be reported as not attending kindergarten, but were still attending a pre-school program such as a three year old activity group, childcare or long day care centre or other early learning

centre. Many parents commented that their child who was four years old at the follow-up time point would be attending kindergarten the following year.

The survey also asked parents to report on their child’s development and readiness for school using a series of questions which have been tested and validated in other research, and are used to inform two child development scales. The scales assessed child development across a range of physical, social and linguistic measures appropriate either for babies and toddlers (0-3 years) or for pre-schoolers (4-5years). Questions were asked at both baseline and follow up for the child/ children which the parent brought to playgroup. Four and five year old children who did not attend playgroup (because they were at school or kindergarten) were not included in the results. Results indicated a statistically significant increase in child development scores for the 4-5 year old cohort over the course of the year, however it should be remembered that the absolute number of children who were scored at both time points is very small (n=6). Child development scores for the 0-3 year olds (n=19) also showed an increase over the course of the year, however it was not a big enough increase to be statistically significant (p=0.27) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Child development



Social Cohesion

Social cohesion is a difficult concept to define and measure, however there is general agreement that social cohesion captures elements such as sense of belonging, social connections and sense of community. This survey used a series of previously validated questions to create a social cohesion scale. The questions covered areas such as

- Belonging as a member of the “community”

- Neighbourhood belonging
- Closeness to friends
- Confidence with English
- Support
- Neighbourhood as a place to bring up children
- Parental self-efficacy

Interestingly, parents scored themselves very highly on these measures at both baseline and follow up. We posit that this is because the parents who attend SP-DC programs do so on the basis of a recommendation from a friend or trusted professional, suggesting that parents who are well-connected socially are more likely to participate than those who are more socially isolated. Anecdotal evidence from interviews and conversations with participants suggests that this is the case, however the survey did not specifically ask parents about their referral pathways into SP-DC.

Only two measures of social cohesion showed statistically significant change between baseline and follow up. All the other measures showed only slight improvements or no change. Of the two measures which did change, the measure of the local neighbourhood as a place to bring up children improved significantly between baseline and follow up ($p=.05$), suggesting that access to an SP-DC playgroup or English class made an appreciable difference to parents' perceptions of the local area.

The other measure which showed significant change between baseline and follow up was the parents' self-reported confidence in using spoken and written English. This measure showed a statistically worse outcome at follow up than at baseline. This may be as a result of what is known in research theory as a reactive effect or Hawthorne effect, whereby parents' awareness of being studied causes them to think more closely about the topic being asked about compared to an earlier response which may have been more automatic. Alternatively, it may suggest that parents' have become more familiar with the nuances and intricacies of the English language over the course of the year and thus have developed a perceptibly more accurate view of their own abilities to communicate effectively using the English language. It should be re-iterated here that the measure is a subjective measure of self-confidence and not an objective test of facility with English language communication. This finding is also at odds with qualitative reports of parents' experience in SP-DC, which strongly suggest that many parents actually found their use of English language improved over the course of their participation in SP-DC. Program workers also reported that they felt the English communication skills of parents improved over the year, as this discussion with playgroup facilitators shows:

Interviewer: What do you see is the biggest success or the best achievements of the program?

Participant: Improve their English because they don't know English [at first]. Parents can't speak English most, and also children too they improve their English.

Participant: Not only English, but also with their Turkish storytellers or their Arabic storytellers and also the facilitators speaking in Turkish, English or Arabic, whatever language they speak. They learn communication.

The most important thing is learning English.

Training pathways

Twenty seven parents provided data on their education, employment and volunteering status for both baseline and follow up surveys. Of these, seven were attending a training course at one or both time points (four at time point one only, three at both time points) and twenty (74%) were not attending a training course at either time point. Two were volunteering at time point two while the other twenty five were not volunteering at either time point.

We observed very little change in the employment status of parents between baseline and follow-up assessments. Twenty (74%) of the twenty seven parents were neither working nor looking for work at both time points. One parent was working casually at both time points and the remaining six shifted between looking for work and working either casually or in a part time capacity across the two time points. These data do not reflect the full extent of the SP-DC project, however, as the parents who participated in the survey were all involved with playgroups (facilitated playgroups or MCELP program), and thus are parents of very young children, not yet of school age. Hence these parents have a lower participation rate in employment and training than those parents with older children.

Administrative data from SP-DC suggest that the parents who participated in the survey are under-representative of parents more broadly who enter training pathways through their involvement with SP-DC. These data show that in 2013, 206 women participated in a recognised training program as part of the SP-DC project. These training programs include certificate courses offered in SP-DC hubs, such as the Certificate I in Food Handling, Introduction to Workplace Practices, and Hospitality course, as well as Certificate Three and Diploma courses in Children's Services offered by local TAFEs and RTOs.

In addition to formal training programs, there were 378 participants in informal learning opportunities such as parenting courses, information sessions offered by the SP-DC Occupational Therapist and women's leadership training. Thirty six women gained employment through SP-DC, as playgroup facilitators and childcare workers. A further 116 took part as volunteers in SP-DC programs, SP-DC hubs and the local schools. These figures represent total numbers of participants and not overall numbers of individual participants, since some women may participate in more than one element of training pathways.

Satisfaction

Satisfaction with both playgroup and MCELP was very high. The follow up survey asked parents a series of questions about their satisfaction with various aspects of the program which they attended. The responses to these questions were combined to provide two satisfaction scales. The first scale measured satisfaction with help received at playgroup/MCELP, for example, whether the information received through the program was helpful and whether the participant was satisfied with the social connections they had made. The responses

were combined to give an average satisfaction rating of 4.3 on a scale of 1-5 (with 5 being completely satisfied), indicating that participants were very satisfied with the help they received at playgroup/MCELP. The second scale measured overall satisfaction with playgroup/MCELP. These questions asked about participants overall satisfaction, as well as satisfaction with aspects of the way the program ran, such as satisfaction with communication from staff and types of activities provided. The combined score on this scale was 4.4 on a scale of 1-5, again indicating that participants were very satisfied overall with the program they attended.

When these figures are broken down by separate questions, we can see that 100% of parents (twenty six parents, one parent didn't answer this question) of respondents agreed that the playgroup program is positive and welcoming, while 26 parents (96%) said that the playgroup meets their needs. One parent said that the playgroup did not meet her needs. Parents were then asked to expand on these responses through open ended questions which asked them to explain the answer they had given, what they liked most about playgroup or English class and what, if anything, could be done better.

Parent responses to the question of why they answered that the playgroup did meet their needs included:

- *Speaking and writing English.*
- *Range of activities.*
- *My husband didn't want my daughter to go to kindergarten but the playgroup people got me the forms and helped me to fill them out.*
- *Whatever we get here we use, at shopping, at the doctor (English class).*
- *Children learn to share.*

Responses to the question of what was most liked about playgroup/ English class include opportunities for parents to socialise:

- *I like the part for snack time because it feels like one family even though we are all from different cultures. Everything here is for education and play.*
- *Everyone's close and gets along.*
- *Meet other parents, socialise. Kids get to know each other. It's good to be mixed. Staff are very friendly and lovely.*

Opportunities for children to socialise:

- *My child gets to socialise with other children.*
- *My daughter is playing and learning to share with other kids. She talks more.*
- *My daughter has no siblings. The playgroup entertains her and she learns.*

Opportunities for children to learn:

- *I'm happy because my children learning and they have activities for the kids like healthy food and play doh.*
- *My son has changed so much since we started.*
- *Children learn different things.*

Opportunities for parents and children to interact with each other:

- *Communication of kids and parents. Gets kids ready for kinder. They [parents] have more ideas of activities to do at home.*
- *Story and singing time.*
- *Meeting other parents and children.*

The environment and staff:

- *Welcoming environment, friendly staff.*

In response to the question of what things would make playgroup/ English classes better, parents mainly commented on physical resources (toys, books, availability of outdoor play spaces) and the need for more hours of English conversational practice. Responses include:

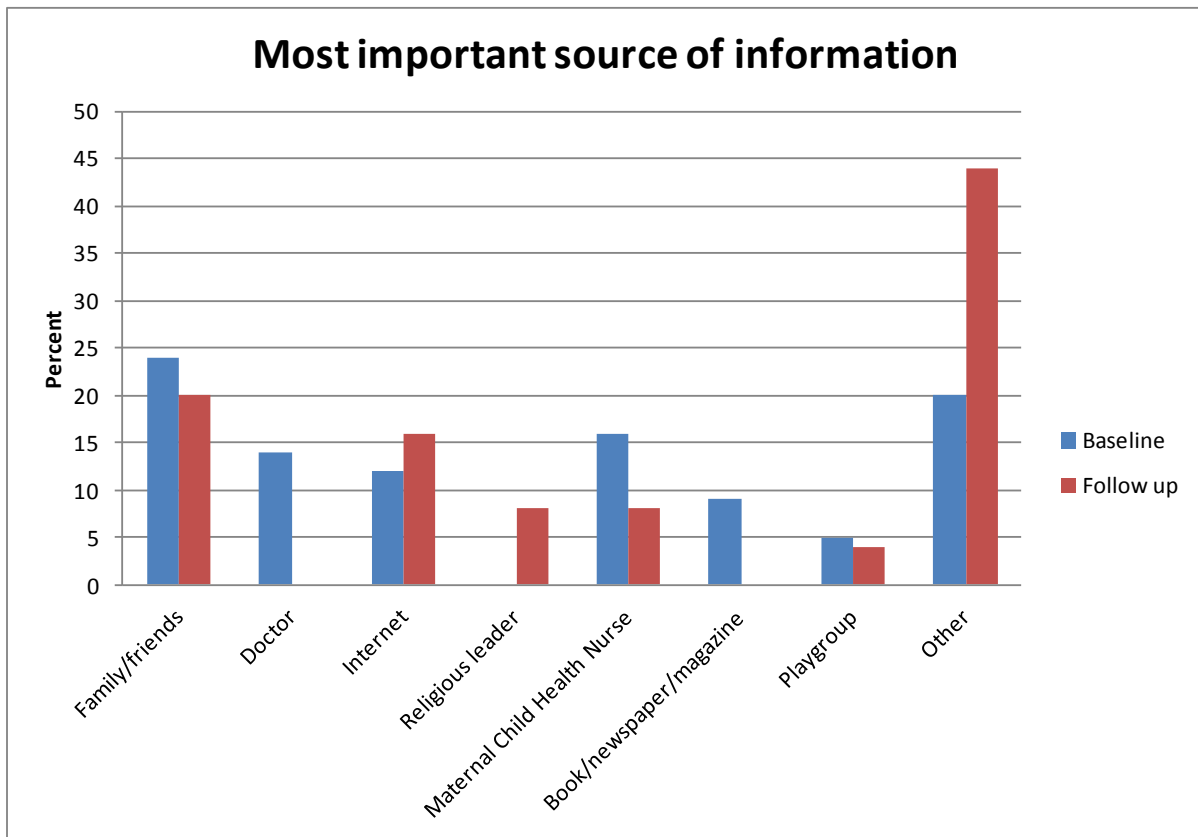
- *Place here could be more organised. Most of the toys are really old and they don't work/have batteries.*
- *Cleaning here in the room, the carpets are dirty.*
- *Outdoor Play.*
- *More toys, puzzles and books.*
- *It's not enough. I need more time to practice speaking.*
- *More days.*

One parent commented that she would like more time for playgroup:

- *More hours. Childcare is so expensive and nothing beats playgroup. The interaction is better here at playgroup than at childcare because parents are interacting with their children. It's more one on one. They also have people come to visit like the dentist.*

All of the parents (100%) agreed with the statement that the other parents at playgroup had provided them with support, while 92% agreed that the playgroup had helped them to understand how children learn. Only one parent disagreed with this statement, while one neither agreed nor disagreed. Twenty three parents (85%) agreed with the statement that the playgroup had taught them about the services which are available to them and their children. Two parents disagreed that playgroup had taught them about the services available and two parents neither agreed nor disagreed. Parents were also asked at both time points about their most important source of parenting information. Family and friends were the biggest single source of information at both time points, however by the time of the follow up survey, many more parents reported that they received parenting information from all of these sources. These responses have been coded as 'other' in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Most important source of information about parenting

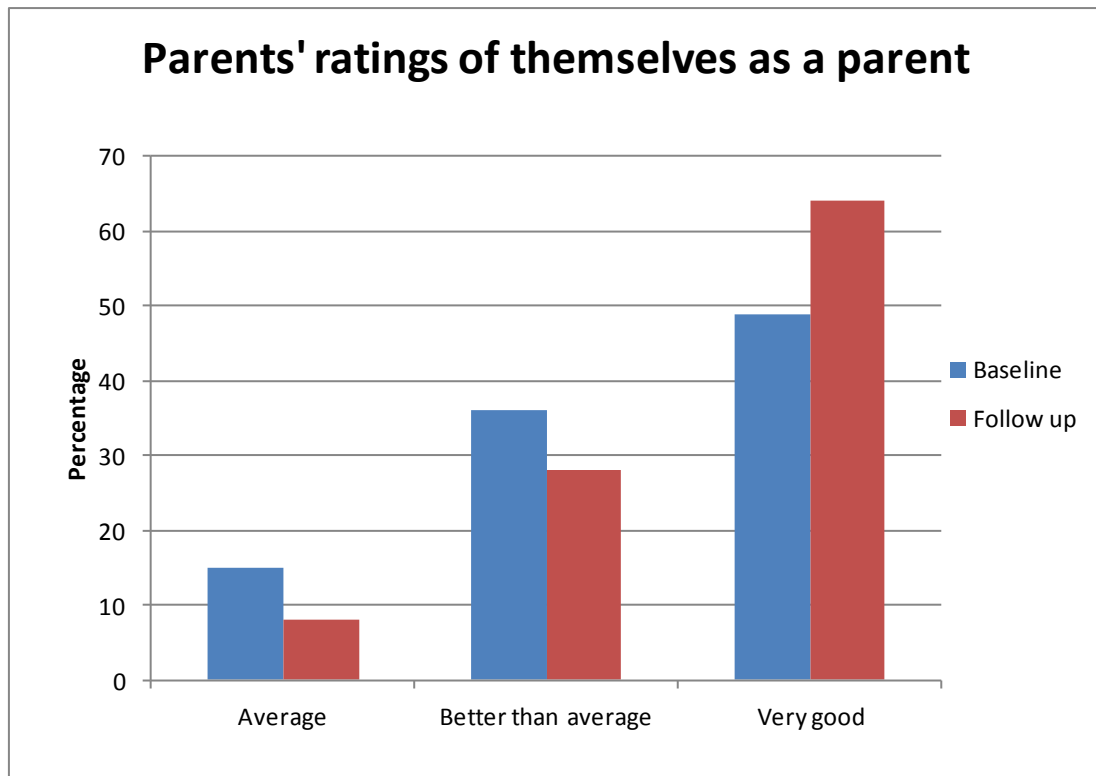


At the follow up time point, parents were asked whether they had received any information about the importance of kindergarten participation for their pre-school children. Seventeen parents (63%) responded that they had received this information. Fourteen parents reported that they had received this information at playgroup, while three parents reported that they had received the information from another source. Ten parents reported that they had not received this kind of information from any source. Of the 17 parents who had received information about the importance of kindergarten participation, 12 (70%) reported that the information they had received was enough, while 5 (30%) said that they had not received enough information.

Parents at both time points were asked to report on their feelings about themselves as a parent. Parents scored themselves very highly on this measure. At baseline, 30 parents (50%) rated themselves as a very good parent (the highest possible category), while 21 (35%) rated themselves as a better than average parent. Nine parents (15%) rated themselves as an average parent and three parents did not answer this question.

At follow up 16 parents (64%) rated themselves as a very good parent, while 7 (28%) rated themselves as a better than average parent. Two parents (8%) rated themselves as an average parent and two parents did not answer this question. No parent rated themselves as a not very good parent or as someone who has some trouble being a parent at either time point. While the numbers do not reach statistical significance ($p=0.25$), they nonetheless show a positive trend. Caution should be used in interpreting these figures, however, as parents are likely to present a positive face to the researchers and are more likely to score themselves highly on questions of this type.

Figure 4 Parents' rating of themselves as a parent



Feedback from parents who were no longer attending the program

As well as the follow up survey with parents who had attended playgroup/ MCELP over the whole year, a short survey was conducted at the second time point with parents who no longer attended one of the programs. Twelve responses were received in this survey, which asked parents very briefly to explain their involvement with SP-DC and the reasons why they no longer attended. Eleven of the respondents in this survey had initially attended an SP-DC playgroup and one had initially attended a MCELP class. All of the playgroup attendees had joined their playgroup on the recommendation of a friend, while the MCELP participant had been referred through the Early Years Hub Worker. Two thirds of participants had attended between three and ten sessions before dropping out, while one third attended more than ten sessions.

The reasons given for no longer continuing with the program were diverse, however they included the following:

- Participant started working (n=3)
- The time was not convenient (n=2)
- Personal reasons (n=4)
- Child started school or kinder (n=1)
- Participant had a new baby (n=1), and
- Lack of transport/ venue to hard to get to (n=1).

Although three respondents stopped attending because they had moved into employment, no participants reported that they had moved into employment, education or training as a result of their participation in the program. Three respondents reported that they were attending a different playgroup than the SP-DC playgroup. Two of these cited a better program or better resources at the new playgroup and one was attending a playgroup closer to their child's school. No parent was attending a different English class.

PARENT PARTICIPANT CASE STUDIES

In addition to the quantitative data outlined above, a case study approach was also employed to tease out some of the richness of individual experiences within the SP-DC program. Three case study interviews were conducted with individual participants, each of whom had a different story to tell about their own and their family's journey. The case studies are presented here.

Case study one – participation: the importance of early intervention

Meryem has two children and is now pregnant with the third. She has been in Australia for nine years, but is not confident in speaking English and has no family here apart from her husband. She has only one friend in the local area. Meryem started attending playgroup with her son after receiving information from her maternal and child health nurse. She initially attended a group near her home, but she wasn't happy there. She felt the room was too small and there was insufficient attention paid to the children. She asked the Maternal and Child Health Nurse for another recommendation and was referred to the SP-DC playgroup which she now attends. When she first started at this playgroup her son was two years old and non-verbal. The playgroup facilitator noted that he had significant behavioural issues and was prone to shouting, hitting and having tantrums.

Meryem noted that both her husband and her father-in-law had been slow to speak, and she was not concerned about her son's behaviour. The playgroup facilitator requested the SP-DC funded Occupational Therapist visit the playgroup and make some recommendations. This she did, and was able to establish a trusting relationship with Meryem and suggest some activities which could be established at playgroup and practiced at home. Through the support of the playgroup facilitator, the SP-DC Occupational Therapist and the bilingual hub worker who speaks Meryem's first language, Meryem came to recognise the importance of play and interaction with her son, and also her daughter who had since been born. She commented that playgroup had shown her the importance of early play and learning, and had given her some practical strategies to engage her children's interests, without which they would just have been watching TV all day. But, as she said herself:

It was educational for my son, not only for my son it was also educational for me as well. Being the first child I didn't know how to play, you know, how to interact with him. Over here [in this playgroup] the staff demonstrate [appropriate behaviour], model how to interact and play with your child and that's the reason [I like it].

The bilingual storytime program was also beneficial for her son, who struggled to understand English at the beginning, but gradually improved his ability to listen, concentrate and understand. In fact Meryem noted how the activities at playgroup helped her in her parenting at home as well:

It's helped me a lot in terms of to teach me how to interact and how to play with him, even how to make play doh and play with him otherwise he was watching TV and we weren't interacting and that was a more difficult job. But it helped me to go through the day interacting and playing and working with him at home as well. And I found out his interests and what he wants to play with here and we take that home and practice that at home as well.

She also noted the importance of the psychological support she received from all the staff at the playgroup in helping her to parent a child with challenging behaviours. She described how important it was seeing her children grow and learn:

Overall getting out of the house, coming to this place, seeing the children happy, they are happy, they are learning, seeing the progress makes me happy

She has also been involved with other activities which are provided for children and families at the hub and across the City of Hume and is looking forward to having her son move into four year old kindergarten next year. She has vowed to continue attending the hub for playgroup with her new baby, the three-year old pre-kindergarten program with her daughter as well kinder with her son. She smiled to note the clashing times of the programs and the challenges this would bring but is determined to continue. As Meryem says:

Playgroup and the three year old program, it makes a lot of change and I do believe now that early years are very important, the earlier you get to them the better and I have seen that.

Case study two – social cohesion: engaging a new arrival

Farida is a newly arrived mother of three children, aged 12, 7 and five. She has been in Australia for less than one year and has enrolled her two older boys in her local primary school, where she also attends a Mother Child English Language Program class with her youngest child, who is also currently attending kindergarten. Farida doesn't speak English well, although she is a gregarious and outgoing person. She is married, but has no

family in Australia apart from her husband. She noted that:

We have no family and friends in the area. Our parents and family can't afford to visit, it is very expensive.

She found out about the English language program through the school and decided to attend because:

I really want to have better English and improve these skills. Not being able to talk to people makes me lonely.

She also reported that:

This is the first time I have attended anything, although my children go to school and kinder.

Attending the class has helped Farida to feel more connected to her local community and to socialise outside her home. She reported that:

The program has helped me to make friends here. I look forward to coming every Wednesday. I have started to talk a little bit in English..... I feel more confident.

While Farida maintained a cheerful and optimistic outlook, she also revealed a deeper sense of loss and loneliness in Australia:

Things are fine, no actually they are not that good. It is very hard. I miss my family and I find it hard not being able to talk with everyone. I feel sad and miss my home and my family. I talk with them sometimes on the mobile phone, but it is not the same.

My children are starting to settle down. My eldest son was in grade 5 is well settled. The middle one has had some troubles; he is in grade 2 and had a hard time. He is starting to settle down now he is starting to improve his English. The youngest will be okay because he comes here and to kinder. When he starts school he will have better English and find it easier.

But Farida also reported that her confidence in speaking English was beginning to help her to participate more in community life, although she also relied on her eldest son to explain things to her. She said that:

Yes I feel [more] comfortable about accessing medical, like taking my child to the Doctor.

One thing that Farida found particularly good about the MCELP program was that it was designed specifically for women like herself, which helped her to feel more comfortable:

This program is good because it is specifically designed for women who need to learn English; it is more comfortable because everyone is similar. We are all struggling to learn the new language and feel

comfortable.

Farida was looking forward to improving her English further and was keen to find work once her youngest child started school, to help earn income for the family as well as to help her feel more a part of the community.

Case study three – training pathways: transition to employment

Chandra arrived in Australia four years ago. She spent the first year learning English and was unemployed. She lives with her husband and his extended family. She described this time as being hard:

When I arrive in Australia I don't have English nothing else, I was blind.

After ten months of English classes she undertook aged care training, but at the end of the training she gave birth to her son. She stayed at home to care for him for a year, and at the end of the year began looking for work in the aged care sector. Her year out of the workplace counted against her and she was not offered any employment in the field. At the same time she was attending an SP-DC playgroup with her son. She explained why she chose to join the playgroup initially:

Oh yeah exactly I observe when my boy was small and I took him to the Maternal Child Health Nurse and there was plenty of playing things like toys and everything and I found other children coming up from other backgrounds playing there and I make him to sit for a while in there and he just socialised each other. When they talk they talk, they say hello, hi and something. I found that children interact more in other peoples environments so and when I visit, I live near to the library, Broadmeadows library, and I always go to library because the Maternal Health Nurses were giving me like pamphlets about that age and they tell you everything and I went there.

Chandra realised the importance of this early learning, playing and socialising for the children of her community, most of whom have arrived in Australia as refugees. She describes the background of the families in the playgroup which she runs:

I found that it's very important because my, exactly in the family [in my playgroup] they come from refugee background and they have similar thing in the camp, they live in a small hut and they don't have any facilities and they are not socialised like children need to run, to play or something else they don't have any idea. And when they come to playgroup, when they go to library, when they go to Maternal Child Health Nurse, they found that its a bit different for them, and they found that it's OK for the children to be socialised.

Because of her enthusiasm for the importance of early learning and play, and her experiences in trying to find work in the aged care sector, Chandra decided to switch her career focus into childcare. She undertook the SP-DC playgroup facilitator training, which she completed successfully and was offered casual employment as a playgroup facilitator. She also enrolled in a Certificate III course in Child Care and was pleased that what she was learning from the playgroup facilitator training complemented the course content of the child care certificate. As she said of the cross over, "it helped me a lot."

During her Certificate III studies she completed a placement at a childcare centre near her home. The staff at the centre liked her work and on completion of the placement she was offered one day a week of casual work. While she enjoyed this she realised that it was not enough. She therefore enrolled at Victoria University in a Diploma of Children's Services, while continuing to work four days at the child care centre. She is due to complete her Diploma in November this year, after which she has been offered full-time work by her current employer. The security and regular work of a full time job is very important to Chandra, as she explained that:

Because I need a job, I bought a home like three months back and I have mortgage I have to pay... I have to help my husband.

Chandra was appreciative of the opportunities offered to her to establish her career through the mentoring and training offered through SP-DC and noted that she always attended the monthly professional learning sessions offered to the playgroup facilitators by the program. She is a pro-active playgroup facilitator, ringing up new parents and encouraging them to join the group, to socialise and to improve their English language skills.

PROJECT WORKER FINDINGS

FOCUS GROUP

Fourteen playgroup facilitators and bilingual storytellers participated in a focus group in the middle of the year. Given the large number of participants, they were divided into two smaller groups in order to allow all voices to be heard. A trained researcher was present in each group to conduct the groups, ask questions and draw out the responses. The aim of the focus groups was to allow the frontline workers of the project to give their perspectives on the way the project has developed over the last twelve months. The questions which guided the discussions in the focus groups were designed to draw out the workers impressions of the way the project delivers on its overarching aims of increasing participation, developing social cohesion and enhancing training and employment pathways, as well as improving child development, and language and literacy outcomes for mothers and children. The same questions were used for both groups.

The focus groups were audio recorded to ensure accuracy and transcribed. The transcripts were then analysed thematically, according to the project aims described above, as well for other consistent themes which arose in both groups. The findings are described below under the following themes:

- Participation
- Social cohesion
- Training and employment pathways
- Parenting and child development
- Early intervention
- The importance of the multi-disciplinary professionals
- Barriers and improvements.

The following comment from one of the playgroup facilitators sums up the interrelated aspects of these themes and indicates how the program as a whole combines different aims and activities:

I think the playgroup would achieve socialising with the parents and learning and good education for the parents, especially for the mums who attend playgroup, so if they just hand out where the courses are, if they can do English, how they can read the books to their kids, where is the library, things like there is so much information I got through this playgroup.

Participation

Playgroup facilitators were clearly aware of the importance of the playgroups in encouraging participation of potentially isolated mothers and their children. They articulated their sense of the importance of their own roles in allowing this to happen and encouraging women to participate. Typical comments include:

I technically understood where it was an opportunity for families to socialise. Along with that to sort of really share each other's experience through parenting.

I reckon there are burdens for those who don't speak English because doesn't know when they arrive to Australia new, doesn't know what mean about reading with the children. Does it have too many problems for speech, for example, some parents doesn't speak English very good. How they teach children? The playgroup encourages the mother to spend good quality, good time with the parents and encourages the woman, for example some woman doesn't know how to play with the children – they think the play... they think of the end for her life, but if you just come in and let her know the playing really opportunity for children to prepare them to school. Like with some parents doesn't know that they let children touch the scissors for example.

To prepare the parent that before the school, to accept their children can how to hold the scissors, how to cut it, how to hold the book, and let them for example from left to right – the book, even some

people that don't speak English they can talk about that picture. Especially they don't have experience their mother, but that doesn't prepare to be how to look after children.

The bi-lingual storytellers also articulated the importance of their program in encouraging participation:

Yes, because like when the parents see there is a bi-lingual storytime there is someone with a story and everything in their language they feel more belonging or more welcoming and their participating will be I think more constant. They'll be participating more rather than [if] just its in English. ... Yes, also more attending I think.

Both facilitators and storytellers re-iterated the importance of creating welcoming and inclusive spaces and programs, which encouraged parents to participate and interact with their children as well as with other parents. This theme also spills over into the role of the facilitated playgroups in enhancing social cohesion amongst this cohort of mothers.

Social cohesion

Playgroup facilitators work hard to create a positive environment and build social connections amongst different parents. This was especially the case for open playgroups, where parents come from a variety of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

I mentioned to all my playgroups mums I said, "Please. If they're not here today you're free to talk in whatever you want, but if we have another language please try to speak English. I know if you have something private you can see them after session when you get out wait for your kids, you can speak. But please inside we have different nationalities – respect everyone. Speak English to understand. Maybe get her idea or maybe help her to get from her to you". And I tried many times to connect these two – it's very hard but we try hard.

Playgroup facilitators also described the importance of encouraging social connections beyond the playgroup:

I do Turkish playgroup and also my culture is like younger age coming, and marriage and coming [to Australia] and no family here, no friends here and making friends like the mums. After playgroup session is finished and they make friends outside drinking coffee.

And sharing their problems. It doesn't matter how alone... no, I haven't family. I have no parents – so many issues... in other people same situation. I feel sad sitting at home. I wonder children too how they feeling sad, not confident, the parents are shy to go to school to ask some simple questions because she is not speaking English. If she come into our group, it's a little step to make her more confident.

I think an important key thing here is that really lays on the bottom of everything more importantly is really making families feel valued and not just valued, that they belong as a part of this. I personally

think, and the trust. More importantly I think trust. Once trust starts coming into good play then you can unravel a lot of things.

And also too many mums I saw isolated and they home, they don't know, they don't have any families here them to go in attendance to playgroups and sharing some ideas and learning from each other and also that helps, and then they help their kids also. It is a great program.

These efforts are reflected in the parents' reports of how playgroup has helped them to make friends and become less isolated.

Training pathways

As well as encouraging parents within the playgroups, facilitators spoke of their efforts to connect parents to opportunities beyond playgroup itself, especially through English classes which are run in the same hub spaces as the playgroups are. One playgroup facilitator noted the way in which:

The parent also gets more information about the mothers' English class and computer class and with the child care free and say "Oh yes. We will try that one", and they connect to community.

Playgroup facilitators, many of whom had been recruited through the playgroups themselves, were very positive about the facilitator training offered through SP-DC and the importance of having staff who know the community and who understand the settlement and parenting process:

Because this facilitator already there, they know the families and they have some trust and connection with the mums so I think much easier than to bring someone from outside so maybe one of the mums has been trained

The facilitators also appreciated the facilitator training and PD days which they find helps their practice and the overall program a lot.

Parenting and child development

Facilitators were clear in their articulation of the importance of promoting positive behaviours and enhancing child development through shared play and socialisation. This is a strong theme in the project, as well as in the playgroup facilitator training and mentoring, and it has been warmly embraced by the facilitators themselves. Typical comments include:

Some children will get spoiled at home and they don't like to share and do things with other people, so when they come to playgroup they learn how to share and take in turn and play with other children.

The kids learn sharing.... I got like two kids. They are always, “No. That’s mine” Everything she is grabbing at, and “Mine, mine, mine”. After that, after a month or two months after she learned to... now she is going to share. “Alright, you can play now but you should give it to me after OK? Like...” So yes they learnt too much things.

Good for playgroup to encourage parents to have the children creating a bond between the children and the parents, and have the social skills – emotion, language skills ready for school.

This can be quite a change from the way many of the women in the parents’ generation were raised themselves, as one facilitator reminisced:

When I was young, I was only a baby, I can’t remember much she [my mother] sit with me to read with me because she wasn’t educated, do you know what I mean? I personally, I’m trying to connect the parent and the child especially with reading and connecting, because sometimes it’s not connected like to build a strong relationship between mother and child. That’s what I’m achieving.

For another:

Even like cut up fruit, they love that. We had a problem like none of the kids would want to eat fruit and the mums would always bring in chocolate and biscuits and biscuits that were chocolate, so yeah we cut up some fruit in the playgroup, made them into shapes, little flowers, little teddy bears and stuff like that and they loved it. Now we have no biscuits, no chocolate, no fruit juices only water, milk and fruit.

In fact the importance of healthy nutrition as part of the overall playgroup intervention was frequently mentioned by both project workers and by the parents themselves.

Early intervention

Playgroup facilitators understood the importance of early learning for children and were articulate about the difference between what many of them had experienced themselves in their own culture and upbringing, compared with what was expected in the Australian context. One playgroup facilitator explained:

So many parents, especially mums you know told me when I used to run a playgroup and then the storyteller comes as I said, they never used to read a book before they come and found out this information, so that’s what this kids are going to do when they start school. Because so many cultures, in Turkish, Arabic they think they gonna learn reading and writing for school – when they start school and it’s different now, these days. So we tell them you need to start reading after they’re born.

Importance of the multi-disciplinary professionals

Playgroup facilitators were unanimous in their recognition of the importance of having access to the multi-disciplinary professionals through SP-DC.

Yeah, that works. I've got one case from Malaysia, the little boy were three year old and he doesn't sit down or eating by normal kids because the parent sit there with him and feed him, every meal. Every meal they sit there about 45 to one hour. When we see that we make the plan and they see the OT and we teach them when they come up to their house on one week they got the reward for the children and the kid just normally eating after that. They [the parents] say we are so surprised. That's very good and we can't believe it.

Like I have some parents they are concerned about like their language for their kids and like speech, and I refer them to the speech therapy and they were very happy to meet that speech therapy to help them with their children it's very good.

Issues remained for facilitators themselves, though, in encouraging parents to make use of the services available:

Just I want to add something, like with this special needs children or parents it is very good idea, but sometimes we've got parents and I've got parents in my group, they don't accept that they need help. I've got this sort of... like I've got a mum with three children and she really needs help with her children. We can't set up any activities because they start throwing everything and how many times I approach her for help she says, "No. That's fine. I'm fine with my kids". Because those sort of parents like they refuse – they don't accept like yes, you need help; there is sort of services to give you this help, but sometimes they don't accept it.

Barriers and improvements

Playgroup facilitators noted some factors which are external to the program itself, but which can either enhance or hinder participation in the program. Having the playgroup located in a hub was seen very positively by those who were in that position, as well as by those whose playgroups ran in other spaces:

What I realised is the playgroups who run in schools or the schools that there's a hub in it they're more successful I think.

Playgroup facilitators recognised and appreciated the support provided by hub workers and coordinators in helping them achieve their everyday activities and goals.

Factors which hinder participation in the project included things such as:

- Parents' lack of transport.
- Logistics of child care/ school drop offs.
- Weather.
- Timing of the groups with babies' earlier sleep times clashing with older children's afternoon naps.
- Rooms being dirty.
- Toys too old.
- Nowhere to change nappies.
- Not enough room for prams.

As one facilitator reported:

They told us can you tell for mums the prams put them outside. But school principal come in and they tells me please don't leave them outside because it looks not nice.

The playgroup facilitators and bi-lingual storytellers were happy with the way the project is being delivered, and feel confident that the program is meeting its aims for improving participation, social cohesion and training pathways for culturally and linguistically diverse mothers in southern Hume.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

This section summarises the results described above, with particular reference to the research questions of:

- Increased participation in early years services
- Increased social cohesion, and
- Improved access to training and learning pathways.

Participation

The research findings indicate that the SP-DC project is successful in increasing the participation of culturally and linguistically diverse mothers of young children in southern Hume in early years services, both the programs of SP-DC itself, but also in a range of other services which may be run in the Early Years Hubs or by other, external providers. The theme of participation is underpinned by the premise that participation in services which enhance adults' parenting skills, children's general development and the language, literacy and learning skills of both adults and children will improve outcomes for parents and children across a range of life-course indicators. Qualitative data from the evaluation survey indicates that participation in the SP-DC playgroups and MCELP has a measurable impact on child development/readiness for school scores, particularly for the pre-school aged cohort (4-5 year olds). There is also a measurable impact on child development scores for babies and toddlers but the effect size is smaller for this cohort.

The survey also indicates that parents are well aware of the services which are available to them, are aware of the services they and their children need to access and are generally able to access the services which they need. Few parents reported needing to access a service but being unable to do so. The one area where access to service was poorer was for childcare places, and to a lesser extent kindergarten places.

Qualitative data from focus groups with project workers clearly demonstrates that the importance of enhancing parent-child¹ relationships through participation in playgroup programs is well understood by this group, as well as the importance of enhancing parents understanding of early years learning in domains such as shared book reading, healthy nutrition and socialisation. Bilingual storytellers were clear about the benefits of the bilingual storytelling program in increasing parents' and children's desire to attend and participate in playgroup. Playgroup facilitators were also clear about the benefits to playgroups of operating within the context of early years hubs, and the extra support which was available through the presence of hub coordinators and other sources of support.

¹ The term parent is used in this report for consistency, however in practice in 2013 all the evaluation participants were mothers.

Case study interview data also underscore the importance of participation in early years services for isolated mothers, helping to raise parents' awareness of the normal trajectory of child development and to identify signs of need for additional help and support. The integrated nature of the multi-disciplinary team within the playgroups and the hubs really benefits parents in particular need of additional support.

Social cohesion

The theme of participation is closely linked to the theme of social cohesion as it is participation in programs, activities and services which brings potentially isolated parents out of their homes and builds confidence, trust, belonging and connections through enhanced social relationships. Quantitative data from the evaluation survey indicate that social cohesion, as assessed on a composite scale of a range of measures, improved for parents who participated in an SP-DC program for the whole year 2013. While the improvement was generally small, the upward trend indicates a degree of improvement for parents. A key finding was the way parents felt about the neighbourhood as a place to bring up children. This increased significantly, suggesting that the presence and accessibility of a parent and child focussed program such as SP-DC has a very positive impact on its participants' attitude both to the local area and to their child's development.

The finding that parents' self-reported confidence with English language communication significantly declined over the year suggests that parents knowledge and understanding of the intricacies of effective communication may have increased, leading them to reflect more accurately on their own ability and beliefs. The survey did not objectively measure whether parents' English skills had improved, declined or stayed the same, however other comments made in the qualitative data collection indicate that parents did feel that their level of English language skills had improved through their participation in playgroup, and more especially in the MCELP classes. Parents attending MCELP specifically noted that the only change to the class which they could think of would be to have more of it, specifically, more hours of spoken language practice.

Case study data provides a rich source of information about the importance of participation for easing the settlement process of a new arrival. The interview revealed the complex emotional response of an isolated parent, and the importance of both improving language skills and communication ability as well as providing social connections and friendship opportunities.

Findings from focus groups with project workers underscore the importance of improving social connectedness and social outlets for mothers. Project workers worked hard to ensure that their playgroups were welcoming, inclusive and supportive places for all participants and that isolation due to language background was diminished as much as possible.

Training pathways

Case study data which reveals one parent's journey through arrival in Australia as a refugee with limited English through settling, joining a playgroup, training as a playgroup facilitator and then undertaking a certificate course in childcare and ultimately a University Diploma, leading to full-time, qualified work, succinctly captures the critical importance of the articulation of opportunities which SP-DC is able to offer to newly arrived mothers. The combination of experience/familiarity with the playgroup setting, opportunities to participate, the playgroup facilitator and bilingual storyteller training courses, casual employment and ongoing professional development all combine to enhance the ongoing education, training and employment prospects of women who may otherwise struggle in the employment market.

This articulation of training pathways was also recognised by project workers as critical to the success of the playgroups, where the playgroup facilitator was recruited from the playgroup parents and thus understood and could relate to the next wave of parents coming through.

Data from the survey is less useful in contributing to the understanding of the importance of training pathways as the one year time frame between baseline and follow up appears to be insufficient to really establish effective measures of movement through training, education and employment.

APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRES AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

SCHEDULE - CASE STUDY INTERVIEW - PARENTS AND CARERS

Section 1: About you and your family

1. Tell us about your family...
 - a. Prompts: how many children do you have, how old are your children, where were your children born, how many children do you bring with you to the program/s?
2. What language/s do you speak at home?
3. Where were you born?
 - a. if you were not born in Australia, what year did you arrive in Australia?
4. What suburb do you live in?
 - a. how long have you lived here (e.g. in area of southern Hume)
5. Do you have other family and/or friends that live in the local area?

Section 2: About the program

6. How did you find out about the program?
7. Why did you decide to come to the program/s?
8. What do you like most about the program/s?
9. Do you attend any other activities at the early years hub or in the community?
 - a. Prompts: mother goose, homework club, local library, preschool, kindergarten
10. Do you attend any education or training courses at the early years hub or in the community?
 - a. Prompts: course details, how did you find out about the course, what do you hope to achieve from participating in the course (e.g. plans for volunteering or paid work)

Section 3: Achievements and lessons

11. In what ways has attending the program/s contributed to your daily life?
 - a. Prompts: skills, confidence, employment, demands on time, friendships, new connections in the community, impact on family (e.g. spouse)

12. What things helped and/or hindered you to continue to attend the program/s?

13. Do you feel more included within the community as a result of your participation in the program/s?

14. Do you feel more able to participate in the community as a result of your participation in the program/s?
 - a. Prompts: confidence to access services, volunteering, employment

15. Thinking about the program/s, what aspects of your participation have you found the most useful and why?

Section 4: Future

16. Do you plan to continue attending the program/s?
 - a. Prompts: in the next 12 months, over the next few years (depending on age of children)

17. Do you plan on participating in any other education or training programs?
 - a. Prompts: in the next 12 months, over the next few years (depending on age of children)

18. Do you plan on participating in any volunteering or employment opportunities?
 - a. Prompts: in the next 12 months, over the next few years (depending on age of children)

19. Is there anything else you would like to add?

SCHEDULE - FOCUS GROUP - PROGRAM FACILITATORS / WORKERS

Section 1: About playgroup/ bilingual storytime

1. The goal of the Playgroup Enhancement program is to strengthen and expand the playgroup program to increase resources and support to the participating families by:
 - Extending the successful bilingual and multi-lingual facilitated playgroup program into more neighbourhoods
 - Expanding the pool of trained bilingual playgroup facilitators
 - Expanding the resources and support to the playgroup network.

In what way do your playgroup goals align with these?

2. What did you think the playgroup would achieve?
3. Do you feel the playgroup achieved its objectives, in terms of the intended short-term outcomes?
4. What were the barriers to implementing your playgroup?
5. What things helped you to implement your playgroup?
6. In what ways did the program provide value for money?
 - a. Prompts: better opportunities, ways of working, improved relationships, better program, output, outcomes? How does this compare to alternative arrangements (i.e. SP-DC funds not available)?
7. In what ways, if any, does the program collaborate with the other programs that are part of the SP-DC project? Unpack with stories and examples, eg: bilingual storytime, Speech therapist, OT

Section 2: Achievements and lessons

8. if you were thinking about what you do – how would you describe it?, what stories would you tell?
9. What do you see as the biggest successes or the best achievements of the program?

10. What do you think are the three main things that have helped the work of the program?
 - a. What is different about this program that has supported greater access to EY programs

11. What do you think are the three main things that have hindered the work of the program?
 - a. What is different about this program that has hindered greater access to EY programs

12. How do you feel the program has progressed the participation of CALD families in early years service programs?

13. How do you feel the program has created training and learning pathways for CALD parents and carers?

14. How do you feel the program has fostered social cohesion for CALD families?

15. To what extent do you find dissemination of information from SP-DC activities helpful in your planning?

Section 3: Future

16. What would you like to see continue in relation to implementation of the program?

17. What would you like to see done differently in relation to implementation the program?

18. Is there anything else you would like to add?

SCHEDULE – PARTICIPANT SURVEY, PROGRAM COMPLETERS

Post questionnaire full

Please complete the survey below. It should take about 20 minutes.

Thank you!

Parent/Carer Details

Parent ID _____

Date of interview _____

Satisfaction with SP-DC

Thinking about playgroup/ English class, please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The parents I have met through this playgroup/ English class have provided me with support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This playgroup/ English class has helped me understand more about how children learn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This playgroup/ English class had taught me about services available for me and my children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How many children do you usually bring to playgroup? _____

Have you and the child or children that you bring to playgroup attended bilingual storytime? (Please tick all that are applicable)

- Yes, at playgroup
 Yes, at the library
 No

Thinking about the playgroup/ English class, how satisfied are you with the:

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Type of activities provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Level of communication from staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bilingual storytime program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Have you received any information about the importance of kindergarten participation for your preschool children?

- Yes, at playgroup
 Yes, from another person/ place
 No

Do you feel that you received sufficient information on the importance of kindergarten participation for your pre-school children?

- Yes
 No

Do you feel that the playgroup/ English class is positive and welcoming?

Yes
 No

Would you say that the playgroup/ English class meets your needs?

Yes
 No

Can you explain why/ why not?

What did you like most about playgroup/ English class?

Is there anything that you think would make playgroup/ English class better?

Child/ Children details

How many children do you have/care for?

How old are these children? (Starting from the oldest child)

	Less than 1 yo	1 yo	2 yo	3 yo	4 yo	5 yo	6 yo	More than 6 yo
Child 1 (oldest)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child 4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child 5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What is your relationship to the child?

	Mother	Father	Carer	Grandparent	Other
Child 1 (oldest)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child 4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child 5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please indicate if your children are currently attending kindergarten

	Not going to Kinder	Yes, 3 yo Kinder	Yes, 4 yo Kinder
Child 1 (oldest)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child 4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child 5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Has your child/children attended the maternal child health service?

	Attended all scheduled visits	Attended most scheduled visits	Attended some scheduled visits	Rarely attended scheduled visits	Never attended
Child 1 (oldest)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child 4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child 5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Thinking about your child who is 4 or 5 years old that you bring to playgroup...

	No	Yes	A little
Can he/she play and share with others cooperatively?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can he/she clap in time with songs or rhymes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is he/she attentive when listening to a story in the language you speak at home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is he/she attentive when listening to a story in English?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does he/she know what words are in the language you speak at home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does he/she know what words are in English?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can he/she tell stories or experiences in the language you speak at home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can he/she tell stories or experiences in English?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have any concerns about how he/she talks and makes speech sounds?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have any concerns about how he/she understands what you say?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Thinking about your child/children who is/are 1, 2 or 3 years old that you bring to playgroup...
Do you have any concerns about how your child/children:

	No	Yes	A little
use their hands and fingers to do things?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
use the arms and legs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
gets along with others?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
is learning to do things for themselves?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
talk and make speech sounds?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
understands what you say?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Services accessed.
In the last twelve months has your child ever needed the following services?

	Yes, needed service	No, not needed service
Playgroup	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maternal Child Health Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Childcare / creche	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Preschool / kindergarten	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speech therapy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hospital / clinic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Doctor or General Practitioner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Library	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Early years hub	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Were you able to access the service? (Playgroup) Yes
 No

Were you able to access the service? (Maternal Child Health Centre) Yes
 No

Were you able to access the service? (Childcare / creche) Yes
 No

Were you able to access the service? (Preschool / kindergarten) Yes
 No

Were you able to access the service? (Speech therapy) Yes
 No

Were you able to access the service? (Hospital / clinic) Yes
 No

Were you able to access the service? (Doctor / General Practitioner) Yes
 No

Were you able to access the service? (Library) Yes
 No

Were you able to access the service? (Early years hub) Yes
 No

Are you CURRENTLY doing any of the following activities?

- Volunteering with a community group
- Volunteering with a sporting group
- Attending a training course
- None of these activities

Are you attending the training course at an early years hub or somewhere else?

- At an early years hub
- Somewhere else

Where is the training course you are attending?

What is your employment status?

- Not working and not looking for work
- Not working and looking for work
- Casual
- Part-time
- Fulltime

In the NEXT 12 Months, do you plan to do any of the following activities? (Mark all that are applicable)

- Volunteer with a community group
- Volunteer with a sporting group
- Attend a training course
- None of these activities

Where do you plan to do a training course?

- At an early years hub
- Somewhere else

Where else do you plan to do the training course?

What type of employment do you plan to do in the next 12 months?

- Not work and not looking to work
- Look for work
- Casual
- Part-time
- Full-time

Belonging, connections and community.

How much do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel I belong in my playgroup/ English class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel I belong in my neighbourhood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel I belong in the broader City of Hume community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel I belong in the Victorian community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel I belong in the Australian community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel closely attached to my friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My friends take notice of my opinions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometimes I feel excluded among my friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If I need information about a local service I know where to get it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Most people in my neighbourhood can be trusted	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel well informed about local affairs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel confident speaking English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel confident reading English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel confident writing English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How often do you feel that you need support or help but can't get it from anyone?

- Very often
 Often
 Sometimes
 Never
 I don't need help

How do you feel about your neighbourhood as a place to bring up children?

- Very good
 Good
 Fair
 Poor
 Very poor

Overall, which one of the following statements best describes how you feel about yourself as a parent?

- Not very good at being a parent
 A person who has some trouble being a parent
 An average parent
 A better than average parent
 A very good parent

What is your MOST IMPORTANT source of information about parenting and child development? (Tick one only)

- Friend / family member
 Doctor
 Internet
 Religious leader / organisation
 Maternal Child Health Nurse
 Book, newspaper, magazine
 Playgroup
 Other

If other, please specify

SCHEDULE – PARTICIPANT SURVEY, NON-COMPLETERS

non-completers questionnaire

Please complete the survey below.

Thank you!

Non-completers.

This survey should take about 5 minutes to complete.

Parent ID: _____

Date of Interview: _____

Initial program attended playgroup
 MCELP

Why did you initially attend the playgroup? _____

Why did you initially attend MCELP? _____

How did you find out about the program?
 Friend
 At another playgroup
 Through my child's school
 Through the Early Years Hub worker
 Through a flier or newsletter
 Online
 Other

If other, please explain _____

How many sessions did you attend?
 1-2
 3-10
 More than 10
 Can't remember

What did you like about the program? _____

Was there anything you didn't like about the program? _____

Why did you decide not to attend any more?
 My child started school/ kindergarten
 The time was not convenient
 The venue was too hard to get to/ no transport
 I started working
 I had another baby
 I was too busy
 I didn't like the teacher/ leader
 I moved house
 My child didn't like the program
 Other

If other reason, please explain: _____

Are you attending playgroup somewhere else?
 Yes
 No

Are you attending English class somewhere else?
 Yes
 No

If yes, where: _____

Why are you attending elsewhere? _____

Have you moved into education, employment or training as a result of your participation in playgroup?

- Yes
- No

Have you moved into education, employment or training as a result of your participation in English class?

- Yes
- No

Education, employment or training?

- Education
- Employment
- Training

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about playgroup?

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about English class?
