

Case study | Building relationships

Working with vulnerable families

Learn more about Community Hubs with these real-life examples. In this case study, Maureen Leahy, coordinator of Meadows Primary Hub, tells us she builds relationships with families by welcoming them into the school and Hub.

What was the challenge?

Social cohesion is the thing we have to constantly work on. We work with three groups of families—new arrivals to Australia, those who've been here for years who have little English and established families with long-term generational poverty. Many weren't happy about mixing with other groups, they wanted to stick within their own culture.

What worked? What didn't?

We have created a welcome room with tea and coffee facilities, a gathering space just for families to use and to share friendships and feel part of the school. Identifying key people within the groups and giving them roles has been effective in breaking down barriers. For example we had a mother who had bad experiences with school as a child. She was anti-everything we were trying to do.

"Develop strong relationships with local leaders in each community."

Giving her the role of gathering all the volunteers together at the start of the kitchen garden session is something small but it changed her attitude. She's a very positive person now and she's on the school council. When people say they want to sit with their friends, I ask key people to hand around plates of food or go and sit at other tables. It helps people to get to know others and we often do activities like try to remember three things about the person you've just met.

Your advice?

Be very clear from the start that the Hub is a place for everybody. You've got to have a clear idea of what the codes of conduct will be. Be clear that the Hub is a caring environment where families can discuss individual differences and negotiate responsibly but they cannot dictate to others.

View all case studies at
www.communityhubs.org.au/resources

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Community Hubs is a national program that links families and their preschool children to services and support, learning opportunities or the wider community. Community Hubs makes it easier for families to access the assistance they need by bringing local education, health, community and settlement information and services into a familiar and friendly place such as a school or community space.

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