Case Study One: Improving outcomes for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) Communities.
Introduction

This is the first in a series of case studies that share lessons from an evaluation of the Greater Shepparton Communities for Children program. These case studies are intended to be the learning focus for the program’s ‘community of practice’ – the practitioners, managers and leaders involved in the program. Through knowledge sharing, discussion and collaborative problem-solving, the community of practice can help drive meaningful change that lasts.

This case study focuses on aspects of the program that relate to improving outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) communities.

The contents of this case study...

- defines the Program’s rationale why we’re doing this
- explains what the Program is doing
- explains how it is addressing the Cross Cultural focus
- outlines what has been achieved
- includes two first person stories of significant change
- outlines lessons, challenges & next steps

Methods used

The Most Significant Change Technique is an evaluation method using first person stories of change. It is a very effective way to listen to community people’s experience of a program.

Case Study is a document that considers one element of a program so that learning can be undertaken (this document).

Community of Practice is a gathering of practitioners who come together to learn how they can improve their practice.
The rationale - why we’re doing it

The Communities for Children Program has a vision that all families and children in the City of Greater Shepparton have the opportunity to develop and grow in a supportive and nurturing community. To achieve this vision the Greater Shepparton Communities For Children Strategic Plan 2015-19 has identified six priority areas.

The Greater Shepparton community is one of increasing cultural and linguistic diversity (CaLD). Priority Two has a Cross-Cultural Focus to improve outcomes for CaLD children and their families. This priority area involves implementing 3 strategies:

- building capacity of CaLD families through parenting skills and development
- increasing culturally aware and competent service delivery
- promotion of equity and inclusion for CaLD families

The 2014 community consultation identified the following interests and needs within the local CaLD community:

- English language and literacy
- Family violence
- Intergenerational issues between children and parents
- Integration with the wider community
What the program is doing

This is the CfC program’s theory of how it will achieve its vision and intended outcomes.

It presents three pathways:

Pathway 1 in Pink: targeted direct service delivery by CfC Community Partners.

Pathway 2 in Orange: Improving the sector through collaboration.

To achieve these CfC undertakes Pathway 3 in Blue: Communities for Children members and partners collaborate with each other.

Within this effort is focused on 6 priority areas Purple.
How the Program is addressing Priority Area 2: Cross Cultural Focus

Pathway one (direct service delivery)
Direct funding of the Cultural Connection program at Kildonan UnitingCare. This includes three projects:
- Parenting in a New Culture (PiNC)
- Face to Face Refugee Experience
- Schools Transitions

Parenting in a New Culture
This is an evidenced-based program run by Kildonan UnitingCare. The project aims to help newly-arrived families adjust to parenting in Australia. It does so by improving parental knowledge on:
- the importance of listening to children and supporting their dreams
- rule-making, boundary setting and negotiating with children
- brain development and early learning
- childhood development and the mother’s role
- respect and responsibilities as important skills for family harmony and future achievement
- Australian culture and how to live cross-culturally.

Elements
- 3 x three-hour sessions and 15 hours over 6 sessions
- 1 x two-day camp incorporating family time
- training of four facilitators to deliver program

Participation
- 10 families within the Arabic-speaking community [mothers and their children]
- Six families within the Dari-speaking community [both parents and their children]

Face to Face Refugee Experience
This is a project aims to improve attitudes towards refugees within the community (and reduced discrimination and racist attitudes). It uses storytelling to improve children’s (and teachers’) knowledge, awareness and empathy in relation to refugees

Elements
- Local refugees and community volunteers are trained in presenting and storytelling

Pathway Two and Three

Refugee presenters and community volunteers attend local schools and tell their story to children and teachers

Participation
- 275 students
- 15 teachers
- 5 Refugee Educators
- 6 Community Educators

This involves overarching efforts of all partners and stakeholders to collaborate and learn about improved service provision in a cross-cultural context. A number of the funded partners have committed to improving their engagement with the CaLD Community and deliver services in a way that is more culturally aware. In doing so they’ve developed cross-cultural access plans.
What’s been achieved

Parenting in a new culture

The two-day camp provided the opportunity leave Shepparton, mix with different people and cultures, and discuss parenting in a mixed group (mothers and fathers). It also provided opportunity to make new friends and access support networks.

Positive levels of engagement from clients

- There was strong evidence that the program had successfully built deeper, more trusting relationships between clients and Kildonan staff.
- Clients spoke openly and willingly about their experiences
- 100% retention on the second day of the camp indicates clients were highly valuing the experience

Participants exhibited significant improvements in attitude, aspiration and confidence

- One participant felt a sense of hope after realising it was possible to be a single mother and be a legitimate family.
- Another participant described improved self-esteem for herself as well as her family.
- Many exhibited a greater appreciation for the importance of education as a means of improving their own – and their children’s – wellbeing and prosperity.

There is evidence of significant behavior change among participating families. The following have been observed:

- improved parent-child relationships
- improved child behaviour
- improved confidence of family unit as a whole
- reduced feelings of isolation among mothers
- increased confidence to engage with other cultures

Some parents learned to manage their expectations of their children in an Australian context.

Many participants report changing their parenting practices, and some report adapting family rules to maintain their culture in an Australian context. Parents also stated progress in relation to boundary setting, communicating, and negotiating with children.

Face to Face Refugee Experience

The face to face Refugee storytelling project helps people connect with the experiences of refugees. It’s very powerful for the story to be told in person, in a safe environment where children can easily engage. The refugee presenter also gains presentation skills.

Children and teachers have an increased understanding of the refugee experience

- Attitudes change for both teachers and children – from fear, to understanding and empathy.

- Children expressed a desire to be inclusive and showed greater acceptance of children of different backgrounds.

Refugee presenters feel more confident and have greater sense of self-worth

- Presenters feel heard and understood, which has led to personal growth and healing
- Presenters feel valued in the community and feel a sense of pride
- Some refugee presenters say the experience has enabled them to find a pathway to further employment

Improved understanding of refugee experience for community volunteers

- Volunteers share their experience with their families and broader community
- Cultural understanding and acknowledged collaboration between the refugee presenters and the community volunteers.
“Mothers have gained some new understanding in regard to child development, child behaviour management strategies, mental health management and resettlement as a result they are more confident. For example a family was together in a session, a male and a female being together in a group has not happened before. We invited the police into this group without their uniforms and one women spoke up to clarify with the female police officer about her rights in relation to domestic violence in front of her husband in the group.”

“The strengthening of cross cultural relationships is really important. The relationships that we are having with our clients are real relationships not transactional or superficial. At the end of PiNC the families gave a gift to show their thanks, which means that these relationships for them are real. I can go to their houses and we greet each other down the street.”

“Parents have more awareness of services, which the families attending playgroup and homework clubs may access. This is enabling more successful connections. Transition to mainstream education is being strengthened. As we and our clients are becoming more aware of services, networks are becoming more connected. This is important so that clients know where to go for services so that they can continue to progress in the future.”
Story #1: Encouraged me to keep going

How have you been involved with Parenting in a New Culture (PINC)?

Fatima rang and asked me if I would like to be a part of the program. As a single mum with 3 boys to take care of I need things like this to help me. The camp we went on was great; I loved being able to take my kids. I believe my kids need these types of activities it gives them hope for the future. It was a great program; it helped me to deal with the kids. I liked listening to the guest speakers, we had both a male and female police officer come and speak to us about the things we could do for our children as parents. I was involved with the other parents in the group, I learnt from them too.

What are the most important changes that you feel have resulted from the project?

- My family’s self-esteem. We had more confidence as a family. My boys’ could see I had more confidence, which gave them more confidence.
- I learnt the importance of education
- How to deal with two different cultures – they are both important, we live here now
- My relationship is stronger with my kids
- Reflection – I never used to stop and reflect on what I was doing and what was working. I now know that it is okay to do this.

Which is the MOST significant change for you?

My family’s self-esteem. My kids felt low because they missed their father. I cannot provide activities for my children, they miss out. Honestly, I am a single mum, I do not have a job - we live from centrelink payments. It is hard for them (the kids), they hear the other kids at school talking about their holidays to QLD and Brisbane; they have never been out of Shepparton. When I told them, 2 days before the camp that we were going they couldn’t believe it. My kids got involved on the camp, they showed more confidence. I couldn’t believe it when they spoke loudly in front of others. Before, especially my middle son he would not speak or mix with other kids. It provided him with new relationships, and more friends. PINC helped me to feel I was not alone and that I had to go on. PINC provided a space to share and to listen not only to our kids but to each other as parents. Now I feel, even at home they are different to me, we are closer.

Why is this significant for you?

It encouraged me to keep going with life without my husband and with my three boys. It encouraged me that I could play the role of both mother and father to them (my boys). I had to change. My boys saw this change; they embraced it and are happy with the path we are on. If I have confidence in me they can see it, I must keep doing what I’m doing. At the camp I heard the boys say they are happy with what I’m doing. They are happy so am I. This is all that matters.
Story #2: We are all one people

How have you been involved with Face to Face Refugee Experience project?

I work with One FM as a volunteer and host a program in Swahili. I heard through others who work there about the program. They thought that I could tell my story. I then went to Kildonan and put an application in to be part of the program and I was asked questions and completed a Working With Children Check. I waited and then found out I was approved for the program.

I have been involved with the Face to Face Refugee Experience program as a story teller. We go to schools and someone gives a background on refugees and asylum seekers from a world point of view. We then share our stories of being a refugee and there are questions and discussion. The program has just started and we have been to four locations which have been schools and the hospital speaking to doctors.

What are the most important changes that you feel have resulted from the project?

1. I feel heard and understood. It helps me by talking and I feel better and “a little happier”.
2. Help the children by them feeling a connection to the story – like they have walked in it.
3. Children have learnt from the story and understood it.
4. Children feel more connected to each other and get along better with each other.

Which is the MOST significant change for you?

Help the children by them feeling a connection to the story – like they have walked in it.

The first time we went to St George’s Rd School and we did three sessions. When the children all walked in they didn’t care and were pushing each other. They sat down but were distracted.

When the story telling started I could see them concentrating. I asked questions and they stayed engaged and asked questions about the story. As I was telling my story I could see, hear and feel changes in how they were treating each other compared to before the story. At the middle of the story we take a short pause and I can see how they are involved and can’t wait to hear the rest of the story.

At the end the children were asked if they had any questions. They asked questions and I was surprised that they really recalled particular parts of the story and I could see they had listened. I can tell they have learnt by the questions they ask. In their faces they feel they have been part of the hardship you’ve been through. Like they’ve lived it. Like they feel they have been through the same thing. I can tell by the way they talk and interact with each other, even the teachers that they can imagine how it was to go through the experience and how lucky they are.

When we had finished the children came up and gave high fives to me and said hi. The children were forming small groups and I could hear they were talking about the story and saying they liked it. Some said it was very nice and some said I wish he didn’t have to go through all that. All the children were sitting together from different backgrounds and religions and I heard that they were having discussions about skin colour and that they said we are all human beings and one people and the same and we should support each other. They also talked about how lucky we are and how hopeful we should be. I can see how they feel more connected to each other after the story and they get along with each other better.

Why is this significant for you?

The aim is to make people understand what asylum seekers/refugees go through. Some just think they are starved, dying or shot and almost dead. They have a picture in their head. When they hear about my life; before being a refugee I am just like them, with dreams and goals. They see refugees in camps have the same goals and dreams they do. When they hear from someone who has lived this experience it is a different thing and they feel more connected to the story. I can see how they start responding differently in the way they sit together and how they talk and react. They try to make the environment safer for each other through movements and actions.
The following summarises the analysis and observations produced during the July 2016 Community of Practice.

Lessons

- Programs with the CaLD communities are effective and there is significant impact.
- Culturally appropriate programs deliver good outcomes for clients.
- Building relationships and trust is essential to achieving significant change.
- Embedding projects into community systems creates traction.
- The most significant change technique is a powerful tool for deepening understanding of changes experienced by individuals.

Challenges and opportunities

- There are significant challenges inherent to the continuation of projects. It is worth considering how to broaden program reach and achieve financial sustainably.
- There are difficulties inherent to measuring the collaborative change and the influence on the sector.
- Maintaining good and skilled staff and volunteers locally is challenging.
- The intensity of being a partner in the Communities for Children project creates limitation given the size of budget being relatively small. Engaging the CfC collaboration takes time and effort.
- The program would benefit from increased community awareness in activities and achievements.
- There are significant opportunities to better engage schools.

Next Steps

- Continue and expand projects while exploring more cost-effective delivery methods
- Continue listening and responding to clients
- Build more relationships with the CaLD leadership
- Focus more effort on cross cultural community awareness
- Continue the most significant change evaluation method given its use as a learning tool
- Consider ways to better measure collaborative efforts
- Consider how to strengthen the CaLD work of all CfC partners and stakeholders
- Consider the establishment of a CfC CaLD working group to focus on Priority Area Two