

Department of **Education**
Learners first, connected and inspired

An Overview of Child and Family Centres



An Overview of Child and Family Centres

1. Tasmania's Child and Family Centres

Child and Family Centres are designed for children from birth to age 5 and their families.

The **purpose** of Child and Family Centres is to improve the health and wellbeing, education and care of Tasmania's very young children by supporting parents, strengthening communities and enhancing accessibility of services in the local community.

The **goals** of the Child and Family Centres are to:

- improve the health and educational outcomes for children – birth to five years.
- provide a range of integrated early years services in the local community to support the development of children birth to five years.
- build on the existing strengths of families and communities and assist in their educational needs.
- increase participation in early years programs such as those offered through Launching into Learning (LIL).
- build community capacity by developing partnerships with parents, carers and the community.
- respond to child and family needs in a seamless and holistic manner.

2. Why establish Child and Family Centres?

The establishment of Child and Family Centres was announced by the Government in 2009, in response to the steadily growing body of research evidence from around the world about the critical importance of the early years and the need for a radical shift in the way services are delivered to children and families.

It becomes increasingly difficult to change trajectories of children as they grow older. Investments in early childhood services are shown to be cost effective, yielding long term benefits to children and to society. The earlier the services are provided the greater the economic return. In response, Governments in all developed nations are now moving towards effective integration of services in an effort to improve outcomes for young children and their families.

[Policy Brief No 17 2009](#), Centre for Community Child Health

"In order to deliver maximum community benefit, CFCs should provide a truly integrated service delivery model. The co-location of services for children and families should be situated within an overarching vision and set of goals that sees a fundamental re-engineering of the full range of services currently delivered by Government agencies, particularly those provided by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education, as opposed to simply moving services to a single site".

(The Hon. David Bartlett, Premier, 2009)

3. What are the essential features of Tasmania's Child and Family Centres?

All Child and Family Centres will:

- offer an integrated suite of high quality programs and services
- provide local programs for every family with babies and young children
- meet the changing needs of the local community
- be a welcoming place for all children and their families

Tasmania's Child and Family Centres (CFCs) are:

- child centred, child friendly, comfortable and warm.
- for all local families with young children from birth to age 5.
- places where families and carers are supported in their vital parenting role.
- specifically designed with input from families and communities to ensure they meet local community needs.
- places where services come together with a focus on integrated service delivery
- places where the Centres resources (physical, financial, human resources) are shared.
- Centres where government and non-government services work in partnership.
- underpinned by a philosophy and process that supports community development.
- managed by a Centre Leader.
- outcomes/results oriented, primarily focussed on children's health, well being, education and care outcomes.
- places where consistent operating principles are used.
- delivering evidence based professional development and training programs.
- offering learning opportunities for family members.
- respectful of all cultural groups.

Child and Family Centres have...

- staff who work collaboratively together across professional disciplines.
- a consistent set of operating principles.
- adjunct care – short term care of children at the centre, provided in conjunction with a meeting, function, or activity that involves the parent/carer of the children and where the parent/ carer remains on site at the centre.
- a seamless provision of service mix to make sure families do not have to tell their story over and over again.
- learning and development opportunities for everyone involved with the centre.

Child and Family Centres are not...

- simply an extension of the local primary school or kindergarten.
- a full day care or long day care child care service (except in those communities where the child care service chooses to locate with the Child and Family Centre).
- run separately, in isolation and without collaboration with other community services.
- a one size fits all approach.
- a place where professionals come first.
- partitioned off for exclusive use by one stakeholder.

All services provided from a CFC will:

- be child/family centred
- respect all cultures
- acknowledge the importance of family in a child's development
- respect mothers, fathers and carers as partners
- build positive relationships
- promote inclusive leadership and teamwork
- be responsive to the needs of children, families and the community
- involve families and community members in decision making and governance.

^[1] Any reference to 'parents' in this document refers also to carers, grandparents and legal guardians, however they are constituted within the community

4. Where are Child and Family Centres located?

To date the Tasmanian Government has invested \$34 million in the establishment of 10 Child and Family Centres. The sites were chosen after extensive research to identify communities with both the need for and potential capacity to support a centre. The key factors underpinning the selection of locations were the level of disadvantage, the projected population growth, the number of 0-4 year olds in the immediate area, data from the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation's report [Outcomes in the Early Years: The State of Tasmania's Young Children 2009](#), and the [Kids Come First Report 2009](#) as well as findings from the social inclusion consultations.

Child and Family Centres are located in the following communities:

- Beaconsfield
- Bridgewater
- Burnie
- Chigwell
- Clarence Plains
- Derwent valley
- East Devonport
- George Town
- Geeveston
- Queenstown
- Ravenswood
- St Helen's

Risdon Cove is the site for the dedicated centre for Aboriginal children and their families. The Risdon Cove Child and Family Centre project is managed through an agreement between the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre and the Department of Education.

5. Australian Government funded early years initiatives

Beaconsfield

The Australian Government has invested \$1.8 million in an Early Learning and Care Centre while the Tasmanian Government has invested \$2.5 million for a Child and Family Centre. Both the new services are sited at Beaconsfield Primary School, creating an integrated service and support hub for children and their families.

Bridgewater and Geeveston CFCs

The Australian Government has funded the two Child and Family Centres at Bridgewater (tagara lia) and Geeveston (wayraparattee) with an investment of \$ 8 million. A key priority of these centres is to help close the gap between the health and education outcomes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. The centres will provide support for all families in their local area, and have been established following the same processes as the other CFCs.

[Contact information for the Centres](#)

6. Design principles of a Child and Family Centre

Child and Family Centre Functional Design Brief

The Department of Education developed a Child and Family Centre Functional Design Brief for use by architects responsible for the design of the various Child and Family Centres. The document was developed in consultation with representatives from Launching into Learning, Child Health and Parenting Services, Child Care services, Neighbourhood Houses, Education and Health representatives.

The [Proposed Functional Design Brief](#) outlines a range of requirements that should be incorporated into each Centre design.

See [Child and Family Centre Functional Design Brief](#).

7. Child and Family Centre Services and Supports

The model of service delivery for Tasmania's Child and Family Centres (CFCs) is intended to be an integrated service model. This means a service focus that brings together a range of services, usually under one roof, where practitioners work collaboratively to deliver services and support children, families and communities.

The CFCs' underpinning philosophy is one which fully supports and embraces the concept of integration. The integrated service model anticipates that communities are empowered to take a level of control and responsibility for the design, implementation, and governance of the local centre.

The Child and Family Centre's (CFC) service mix

The focus of the services provided at CFCs is principally on birth to age 5. Overall, the service mix of a CFC is based on local needs as identified by the community and these will differ according to each community. Services are provided in partnership between government and non-government organisations.

Services for birth to age 5 young children

- Antenatal
- Launching into Learning (LIL) programs for early years
- Early childhood education and care
- Child Health and Parenting Services (CHAPs)
- Child and Family health
- Oral health
- Immunisation
- Nutrition in the early years

- Playgroups
- Children's therapies eg speech and language
- Visiting Paediatricians
- Adjunct care

Services for families and carers

- Adult community education, and vocational training
- Alcohol and drug services
- Coffee meeting place
- Family support including parenting programs
- Information on family issues like parenting, child development, healthy eating
- Mental Health
- Parent education programs
- Pathways to employment programs for parents

Opportunities for carers, community and professionals

- Voluntary work and community building
- Training and support for early years services and primary practitioners
- Training for community members
- Fostering of local networks

Working Together Agreements

Each CFC has developed a Working Together Agreement, based on Family Partnership principles, which all service providers working from a centre sign up to. This ensures that a common philosophy and framework is in place, and that respective roles and responsibilities are understood.

8. About community engagement

8.1. What is community engagement?

Community engagement and participation is an integral part of the Child and Family Centre (CFC) Project to ensure people have the opportunity to shape the decisions that may impact on young children's lives, families and local communities.

'Community engagement' covers the many ways that parents/carers, government and non-government service providers, communities and individuals can connect and interact in developing and implementing policies, programs, services and projects. It is an open, inclusive and accountable process involving a wide variety of departmental and community interactions. These include information sharing, consultation and active participation of the community in decision-making processes.

8.2. Community engagement guiding principles

The guiding principles of the CFC Project are as follows:

- Connecting with those hardest to reach - *inclusiveness*
- Changing the ways government and the community work together – *reaching out*
- Listening, understanding and acting on experiences different from our own – *mutual respect*

- Open and accountable practices and processes - *integrity*
- Incorporating diverse values and interests – *affirming diversity*
- Working together to add value – *adding value*

These guiding principles have been reflected throughout the process of establishing Child and Family Centres, from the early community forums and initial setting up of Local Enabling Groups in each CFC community. An important first step was the appointment in each community of a Community Inclusion Worker (previously called a Social Inclusion Community Liaison Officer).

The process of community engagement has been supported by both the [Learning and Development Strategy](#) and the Action Research Project. Part 1 of the Action Research project describes the development of the Outcomes Framework while Part 2 describes in some detail the community engagement process. www.earlyyears.org.au/research

9. CFC Statewide Outcomes Framework

9.1. What are outcomes?

The State Government supports the outcomes based planning and evaluation framework approach to assess performance. Outcomes are desired conditions of well being for children, families and communities. It assists in asking the question – ‘What is it that we want for Tasmania’s children and families’?

Why have outcomes at the State level?

- To understand what the State Government’s thinking is for CFCs.
- To be clear about what we want to achieve at the state wide level.
- To measure the effectiveness of services.
- To have whole-of-government agreement on specific outcomes.

Why have outcomes at the local community level?

- To provide direction for local communities.
- To reflect specific local community issues and needs.
- To be clear about what’s to be achieved for children, families and communities.
- So that effectiveness of the Centres can be measured.

9.2. Developing the CFC Outcomes Framework

The CFC Project Team together with the Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH) developed the CFC Statewide Outcomes Framework through extensive discussion with Local Enabling Groups in each community. The draft Framework was then endorsed by the Early Years Strategy Interdepartmental Committee (EYSIDC) and was helpful in assisting local communities to develop a Local Outcomes Framework for each CFC. It remains a working document.

The Framework identifies broad outcomes, objectives, strategies and activities of the CFC initiative together with impact and process indicators. Its main role is to establish a common framework and point of reference to guide a consistent approach to the planning, reviewing and monitoring for CFCs

The Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH) was contracted to undertake the Action Research Project which supports the CFC initiative. CCCH worked with Local Enabling Groups (LEGs) to plan, deliver and evaluate the CFC initiative using an outcomes-based approach in order to answer the following questions:

- What are the outcomes we want for children and families as a result of a CFC being established in our community?
- How do we know we are making progress towards these outcomes?
- Have we actually delivered what we said we would and was this done as intended and according to best practice?
- How can we make changes to improve our practice and reach better outcomes?

An outcomes-based approach encourages a focus on the difference that we wish to make, not just on the activities that we undertake.

9.3. What are the long term broad outcomes?

- **Children** are born and remain healthy and are confident and curious learners.
- **Families** nurture healthy development and wellbeing of their children.
- **Communities** support, value, honour and respect children and childhood.
- **Supports and services** respond early to identified needs of young children and their families in culturally appropriate ways.

Below are documents to help explain what the Statewide Outcomes Framework is and the implementation approach planned for Local Enabling Groups to develop a Local Outcomes Framework for their CFC.

[CFC Statewide Outcomes Framework](#)

[CFCs - Development of a Local Outcomes Framework](#)

[CFCs - Development of a Local Outcomes Framework - State and National Activity](#)

10. Governance of Tasmania's Child and Family Centres

10.1. Introduction to Governance models

The CFCs' underpinning philosophy is one which fully supports and embraces the concept of integration. The integrated service model anticipates that communities are empowered to take a level of control and responsibility for the design, implementation, and governance of the local centre.

At some CFC locations, other government and non-government services are delivered within the same site or from the same facility. These include services such as:

- Learning Information Networks Centres (LINC)s - Queenstown
- Service Tasmania –Queenstown
- Local Government services – Queenstown
- Neighbourhood/Community Houses – Ravenswood and Clarence Plains
- Child Care Services – Beaconsfield and Ravenswood

The models of governance for CFCs are still evolving, particularly in those CFCs that have only recently opened. Most CFCs have Advisory Bodies or Boards, which have evolved from the Local Enabling Groups. These have a representation of at least 50% community members, with the rest being managers or service providers from government and non-government organisations. Some Advisory Bodies have become incorporated bodies, giving them a further degree of autonomy.

It is recognised that the governance structure for CFCs may evolve as each CFC develops over time.

11. CFC Learning and Development Strategy & Implementation

11.1. Learning and Development

Integral to the development of Child and Family Centres is a strong Learning and Development Strategy for both service providers and community members in all CFC communities.

This Learning and Development Strategy has been funded since 2009 by the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation (www.earlyyears.org.au), with the Murdoch Children's Research Institute (Centre for Community Child Health, Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne) contracted to deliver the strategy. The L and D team is led by Paul Prichard from the Centre for Community Child Health, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, working alongside the Child and Family Centre Project Team.

11.1.1. Why a Learning and Development Strategy?

The Tasmanian Child and Family Centre Project aims to fundamentally change the way our system provides services for families, particularly those that often find services difficult to access. This will not be achieved by simply co-locating services in one physical space, but involves changing the way services are designed and delivered.

Outcomes for children and families can improve when services are delivered in a more collaborative and integrated way. This is what we hope to achieve in Child and Family Centres. This means changing the way we work. This takes time as well as significant cultural shifts and requires a shared vision, and commitment. The Learning and Development Strategy emerged from the strategic thinking and investment from the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation, which supports and promotes the wellbeing, development and learning of Tasmanian children up to the age of six years. It was recognised that the quality of the professional development across all service providers and leadership of Tasmania's CFCs is critical to their success.

11.1.2. Objective of the L and D Strategy

The overarching objective of the Tasmanian Child & Family Centres Learning and Development Strategy is to provide a planned professional development program for staff and community members who are involved in the establishment and operation of CFCs.

This has involved a number of different strategies that are designed to support staff and community members involved with CFCs to work towards an integrated service model in achieving the stated outcomes of the project.

11.1.3. Philosophy of the L and D Strategy

The Learning and Development Strategy has put significant emphasis on genuine engagement with the local community in the visioning, planning, design, implementation and functioning of the CFC's. Wherever possible, all meetings and workshops are planned and held in a way that supports access by interested parents and other community members. The Tasmanian CFC approach to engaging community has been heavily influenced by Dr. Margy Whalley (Pen Green Centre for Children and Families, Corby, UK. www.pengreen.org). We recognise that co-production of service models, between community and services, is the most respectful and sustainable approach to service re-development.

"Most public services are beginning to see that co-production is the way forward to ensure the most effective use of resources, greater personalisation, community cohesion and satisfaction. Co-production is defined as a strong and equal partnership between the users and providers of public

services to achieve a valued outcome. Within a philosophy of co-production everyone has something to contribute, reciprocity is important, social relationships matter and social contributions (rather than financial contributions) are encouraged.” (Critical issues for 21st century children’s centres - Emergent issues from a series of think tanks, Pen Green Research, Development & Training Base & Leadership Centre, 2010, pg. 28)

The ultimate aim of CFC’s is not only to improve outcomes for children but also to assist their parents and other community members to increase their local community participation through volunteerism, further training and skill development, networks of support, and future employment opportunities.

11.1.4. Importance of the Family Partnership Model

The Family Partnership Model (Centre for Parent and Child Support, UK, 2002) underpins and is integral to all training within CFC communities. It supports a shared language and understanding as well as a common philosophy across all CFC’s. The Learning and Development Strategy has provided the 5 day Family Partnership foundation course to all CFC service personnel and community members who are engaged in the CFC development process. This shared approach to professional development (community members with service providers) has helped reinforce the importance of genuine engagement with community.

[The Family Partnership Model](#)

“The Family Partnership Model is an innovative approach based upon an explicit model of the helping process that demonstrates how specific helper qualities and skills, when used in partnership, enable parents and families to overcome their difficulties, build strengths and resilience and fulfil their goals more effectively.

The Family Partnership Model is an evidence-based method, the effectiveness of which has been demonstrated through a number of research trials conducted by the Centre as well as independent randomised trials. The findings of these trials indicate positive benefits to the developmental progress of children (e.g. Davis & Rushton, 1991; APIP, 1998), parent-child interaction (Barlow et al, 2007; Puura et al, 2005) and the psychological functioning of parents, families and children (e.g. Davis & Rushton, 1991; Davis & Spurr, 1998).”

11.1.5. Supporting the journey towards integration: use of the Platforms Framework

A stepped approach to changing what we do and how we do it

A core part of the Learning and Development Strategy for the Tasmanian CFC’s includes working with those who are actively involved in the planning and day to day functioning of a CFC. The group is supported over an extended period of time, with the facilitator using the various steps identified in the Platforms Services Re-development Framework ([Centre for Community Child Health](#), Vic) as a guide.

Platforms is designed to strengthen the capacity of communities to promote positive outcomes for children. The Framework guides communities through a stepwise process to facilitate a positive network of effective services that promote early childhood development. The *Platforms Framework* involves six key phases:

Start: raising awareness, gathering support;

Build: establishing/strengthening a partnership, creating a shared understanding of how you will work together, creating a vision;

Learn: taking an ecological approach, collecting information, making sense of the information;

Plan for change using an outcomes-based approach: considering the evidence, planning how you can make a difference, developing a work plan;

Implement: making it happen, monitoring delivery of the plan, checking on the partnership;

Review: collecting, analysing data, reporting on achievements, considering the next steps.

An additional practical resource *Moving Forward Together* has been written to help those using the *Platforms Framework*. [Moving forward Together - A guide to support the integration of service delivery for children and families](#)

[Platforms Framework Roadmap 2012](#)

There is currently no other Australian state or territory that has given such strong emphasis to genuine community engagement in the development of local early childhood service models. On the basis of the Tasmanian experience the Centre for Community Child Health has significantly changed the way it provides information and training nationally in relation to the Platforms framework.

11.1.6. Key professional learning opportunities

CFC community members and service providers participate in key professional learning opportunities, including Family Partnership Foundation Course and Facilitator Training, Father Inclusive Practice, Aboriginal Cultural Safety Training, Reflective Practice, and Empowering Parents Empowering Communities. The L and D Strategy team also nurture a framework of reflective practice among all stakeholders involved in the process.

Additionally the L and D Strategy team facilitate up to three **State Wide CFC Forums** each year where CFCs can showcase what is working well and what communities are learning on the journey, with contributions from visiting experts.

11.1.7. Some of the challenges

There have inevitably been a number of challenges in delivering the strategy over the past three years, not least the time involved in supporting genuine community engagement and the journey to integrated services in 12 communities across Tasmania.

One challenge has been the continuity of key personnel. There have been several changes of leadership in the project team, key government representatives, service providers and community members. Some of this is inevitable, but involves further investment of time and energy to ensure everyone is on the same page.

A further challenge is balancing the intensity of the support required with the available resources, a large geographical coverage and a shrinking project team. Consistent leadership and vision from the L and D team through Paul Prichard has been important in maintaining relationships and trust.

11.1.8. What we have learnt

Through the delivery of this project we have come to understand there are certain factors that need to be present to support the success of this strategy. They include:

- Supporting genuine community engagement – Services and their staff have been supported to recognise the critical importance of “sharing power” with community members in the process of

planning for and moving towards service re-development. This process is complex and often takes time.

- Relationships between community and service representative stakeholders must be based on open, respectful, and genuine partnership. This notion requires constant modelling and reflection.
- Flexibility in supporting change – the Learning and Development team have been required to display significant flexibility to cater for changing needs of all involved in the project across Tasmania. This has presented challenges to meeting project deadlines.
- Multi layered collaboration – The success of this strategy and the CFC project is dependent on genuine collaboration across all tiers to enable the change required for improved outcomes for children. As an example: Worker ‘change in practice’ that is sustainable, requires understanding, agreement, training, and even policy change at other levels within individual organisations and whole systems.
- A common framework of practice – The Family Partnership Model (Centre for Parent and Child Support, UK) has been used as a foundational framework for supporting relationship development and planning within the CFC communities. It has been important in influencing the way both training and community based workshops have been designed and facilitated; it has also enabled a familiar culture of how stakeholders work together in each site.

11.1.9. Priorities for future action

Two main themes are **Working in Partnership**, and **Supporting the Change in Delivering Services**. This will include ongoing Family Partnership Training and embedding Family Partnership training and philosophy into organisational processes and systems.

To support the change in delivering services, areas of focus will include;

- Working in a trans-disciplinary team
- strategic planning and outcomes reviews
- using data and evaluation
- ongoing supervision and support around partnership approaches and genuine community engagement
- use of Platforms resources to support the change journey
- inclusive practice training
- cultural safety training
- governance support and training
- volunteer support and training

11.2. Critical thinker visits

Dr Margy Whalley has been a critical friend and mentor to the Tasmanian CFC project since 2009.

She has now visited the State on 3 occasions, sponsored by the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation.

Margy is Director of Research, Development and Training at Pen Green Centre for Children and Families (Corby, UK), previously being Director of the Centre for 18 years (www.pengreen.org).

On her second visit of nine days (February 2010) Margy spoke at a number of forums around the State and attending meetings with government officials, CFC project team, University of Tasmania, and the Centre for Community Child Health (CCCH). Her most recent visit (October 2012) involved forums and discussions at several CFs, as well as time with the project team.

Margy's reflections on the Tasmanian CFC journey and the challenges she poses have been invaluable in stimulating and developing our thinking, including her question "What have you done to make sure that what you are doing, designing, creating, changing is in direct and meaningful engagement with the local community, in particular, those we do not usually hear from?"

Video vignettes from Margy Whalley's visit in 2010 are available:

- [An integrated centre](#)
- [Changing the way we work](#)
- [Honouring the voice of the community](#)
- [Some thoughts on inclusive ways of working](#)

11.3. Funding for Learning and Development

By 2015, the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation will have invested approximately \$900,000 in the Learning and Development Strategy over a 6 year period. This is in addition to the in-kind and operational support provided by the Department of Education.

The Foundation has provided a further \$400,000 from 2011 to 2014 to implement the Empowering Parent Empowering Communities project (Centre for Parent and Child Support, UK) as well as \$400,000 since 2010 for the concurrent Child and Family Centre Action Research Project. The Centre for Community Child Health at the Royal Children's Hospital, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Vic) has been responsible for the management and implementation of all three projects.

12. Related Documents

The following documents are available from www.education.tas.gov.au (Search for the Doc ID)

- [Contact Information for the Centres](#) (Doc ID: TASED-4-3486)
- [Child and Family Centre Functional Design Brief](#) (Doc ID: TASED-4-3505)
- [Proposed CFC Functional Design Brief](#) (Doc ID: TASED-4-3494)
- [CFCs - Development of a Local Outcomes Framework - State and National](#) Activity (Doc ID: TASED-4-3488)
- [CFCs - Development of a Local Outcomes Framework](#) (Doc ID: TASED-4-3489)
- [CFC Statewide Outcomes Based Framework](#) (Doc ID: TASED-4-3491)
- [Platforms Roadmap Revision 2012](#) (Doc ID: TASED-4-3493)
- [CFC Publications and Resources](#) (Doc ID: TASED-4-3678)