

Community Sector Roundtable Information Paper

Child and Parent Centres, Family Support Networks Communities for Children.

The purpose of this paper is to provide information on specific coordinated and integrated programs that work to provide support for families across a continuum of service and risk. The programs identified are two Western Australian (WA) government initiatives – Child and Parent Centres (CPCs) and Family Support Networks (FSNs), and one federal government initiative – Communities for Children (C4C). In all cases, these programs facilitate community service sector agencies led delivery and/or coordination of support and services to vulnerable families in Western Australia.

The paper does not attempt to evaluate and/or make comparisons with other service or funding models within government. It simply provides an overview of the programs, and outlines some key similarities and differences.

Part 1 provides an overview of the initiatives; Part 2 shows the locations of the CPCs, C4Cs and FSNS; and Part 3 provides more detailed information about each initiative including a brief discussion about where each one sits on the service provision and vulnerability continuum, and a summary of common and distinguishing features of the initiatives.

Part 1: Overview of the CPCs, C4C and FSNs

Initiative	Summary	Aim(s)	Types of Services	Target age group	Target Vulnerability level	Funding Source and govt level	Number of locations**
CPCs	Improve access to a range of early learning, parenting support, child and maternal health and well-being programs and services.	To support families to provide a better start in life for their young children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ maternal and child health services; ➤ early learning programs (e.g., literacy/numeracy, & cultural programs); ➤ child support activities (e.g. playgroups); ➤ parenting and family support (e.g., parent literacy, parent workshops, etc); and ➤ referrals to other services. 	Pre-birth to 8 year olds (with focus on pre-birth to 4 year olds).	Universal/ Primary Centres are located in socio-economically disadvantaged communities but services available to all.	WA Government funded (Department of Education*).	21 locations 10 established in 2014; six more established in 2015; and five converted from CFC's in 2016***
C4C	Provide prevention and early intervention activities and programs for families.	To increase child safety and wellbeing by addressing known risk factors that impact on the parenting capacity of families, parents and carers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ parenting support; ➤ group peer support for children, families or carers; ➤ case management; home visiting services; and ➤ other supports to prevent child abuse and neglect. 	0 to 12 year olds (with some programs for up to 18 year olds)	Universal/ Primary	Federal Government funded (Australian Department of Social Services)	52 locations Australia wide; seven in Western Australia
FSNs	Facilitate the provision of support and services for vulnerable families.	To prevent risks from escalating to a crisis where tertiary services and intervention would be required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ intensive parenting programs; ➤ counselling supports; ➤ family and domestic violence support programs; ➤ homelessness services; ➤ programs for young people; and ➤ financial counselling. 	All ages	Secondary Focused on those with complex and/or multiple issues or at risk of crisis.	WA Government funded (Department for Child Protection and Family Support)	Four established; one established in 2012; two in 2014; and one in 2016

* The CPC initiative is led by the Department of Education with the support of the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, and the Departments of Health, and Local Government and Communities.

** See Part 2 of this paper for more details about locations.

***Funding was originally provided by the Australian Government through the *Closing the Gap: National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development*, for the establishment of five Children and Family Centres (CFCs) in WA between 2009 and 2014. This National Partnership ended on 30 June 2014.

Part 2: Locations of the CPCs, C4C and FSNs

Department for Child Protection and Family Support District*	Child and Parent Centres (CPCs)		Family Support Networks (FSNs)		Communities for Children (C4C)
	Name	Official opening date**	Name	Date established	
Armadale	Challis	Sep 2014	Armadale	Feb 2012	Armadale
	East Maddington	Dec 2015			
	Gosnells	Dec 2015			
Cannington	Brookman	Oct 2014			
East Kimberley District	Halls Creek	Jan 2016			East Kimberley
	Kununurra	Jan 2016			
Fremantle			Fremantle	Jan 2016	
Great Southern	Mount Lockyer	Jan 2016			Lower Great Southern
Joondalup	Banksia Grove	Feb 2015			
Midland	Swan Region	Jan 2016			Midland
Mirrabooka	Roseworth	Nov 2014	Mirrabooka	Oct 2014	Mirrabooka
	Warriapendi	Nov 2014			
	Westminster	Nov 2014			
Murchison	Rangeway	Dec 2015	Midwest	Feb 2014	
Peel	Dudley Park	Nov 2014			
Pilbara	South Hedland	Jul 2014			Pilbara
	Roebourne	Jan 2016			
Rockingham	Calista	Aug 2014			Kwinana
	East Waikiki	Dec 2015			
South West	Carey Park	Aug 2014			
	Collie Valley	Dec 2015			
West Kimberley	Fitzroy Crossing	Jan 2016			

*Only Department for Child Protection and Family Support districts where a CPC, C4C and FSN is located, are shown.

** The 'official opening date' of the CPCs is the date when the CPC facility/building - located at a local primary school – was/will be completed. In all cases the CPC was/is operating from a temporary facility from an earlier date.

Part 3: Detailed information about the CPCs, FSNs and C4C

Child and Parent Centres (CPCs)

- Deliver and improve access to a range of programs and services that support families to provide a better start in life for their young children. Services may include maternal and child health services; early learning programs (e.g. literacy/numeracy, and cultural programs), child support activities (e.g. playgroups); parenting and family support (e.g. parent literacy, parent workshops); and referrals to other services.
- Are purpose built premises (or adaptation of existing premises) located on selected public school sites in areas with higher than average concentrations of developmentally vulnerable children.¹
- Target the provision of support and services for children from pre-birth to eight years of age, with a focus on the pre-kindergarten years.
- Are managed by the community services sector in partnership with the Department of Education and supported by the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, Department of Health, and Department of Local Government and Communities.²
- Provide coordination of programs and services accessible at and through the CPCs managed by contracted community service sector organisations, with services delivered by both government and community sector services.
- Are based on an integrated 'hub and spoke' service delivery model with a central core of services delivered at each CPC site and complemented by strong connections to a network of programs and services delivered at other locations to serve surrounding schools and communities.
- Provide services that are locally determined based on the needs and characteristics of the community, and that have a strong research, evidence, and/or practice base to them.
- Have 21 established centres to date, including five Children and Family Centres (CFCs) converted to CPC's from January 2016 (Table 1).³

¹ Data from the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) 2009-2010 showed a strong correlation between the level of disadvantage and the incidence of developmentally-vulnerable children entering WA schools: those living in the most socioeconomically disadvantaged communities are twice as likely to enter school developmentally vulnerable as children living in medium to high socioeconomic index areas. (Note – the AEDC was known as the Australian Early Development Index [AEDI] in 2009-2010). Source: Edith Cowan University, 2013, p 3.

² All government departments involved in the CPC initiative are signatories to a Letter of Agreement (2013) that commits each department to collaborating and participating in the planning and delivery of the CPC initiative. The Agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities of the departments to facilitate integrated service delivery at and through the CPCs, supported by strong connections with both government and community sector service providers.

³ Funding provided through the *Closing the Gap: National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development* ceased in June 2014 and subsequently part of the five existing CFCs were converted into CPCs from January 2016.

Table 1: CPC locations, by opening date

Name (location)	Official opening date
1. South Hedland	Jul 2014
2. Carey Park (Bunbury)	Aug 2014
3. Calista (Kwinana)	Aug 2014
4. Challis (Armadale)	Sep 2014
5. Brookman (Langford)	Oct 2014
6. Roseworth (Girrawheen)	Nov 2014
7. Warriapendi (Balgā)	Nov 2014
8. Westminster	Nov 2014
9. Dudley Park (Mandurah)	Nov 2014
10. Neerabup (Banksia Grove)	Feb 2015
11. East Maddington (Maddington)	Dec 2015
12. Gosnells	Dec 2015
13. Mount Lockyer (Albany)	Dec 2015
14. Rangeway (Geraldton)	Dec 2015
15. East Waikiki (Coo loongup)	Dec 2015
16. Collie Valley (Collie)	Dec 2015
17. Halls Creek	Jan 2016
18. Kununurra	Jan 2016
19. Swan	Jan 2016
20. Roebourne	Jan 2016
21. Fitzroy Crossing	Jan 2016

Family Support Networks (FSNs)

- Facilitate the provision of support and services for families who are experiencing multiple and complex issues, where the support of a number of services is often required.
- Provide a common entry point to services and deliver targeted support to vulnerable families, including, for example, intensive parenting programs, counselling supports, family and domestic violence programs, homelessness services, programs for young people and financial counselling.
- Target the provision of services and support for a broad target group that includes vulnerable children, young people, and families.
- Aim to prevent risks from escalating to a crisis where tertiary services and intervention would be required.
- Are led by the community service sector in partnership with the Department for Child Protection and Family Support (the Department). The Department contracts a community sector organisation to undertake the lead agency role to manage development of partner agency integration⁴ and deliver a common entry point to services that provides streamlined access to support for families.
- Undertake initial screening and assessment to determine which agency or agencies are the most appropriate to respond to the specific needs of the family.
- Use a self-directed approach to service design with the FSN assessment process incorporating direct input from each family about their problems and goals and the services they wish to access, providing choice and control for families.

⁴ Each community sector partner agency signs a Memorandum of Understanding with the lead agency to guide the partnership approach between agencies.

- Have four established FSNs to date – Armadale, the Midwest, Mirrabooka and Fremantle.
- Hold a key role in meeting the aims of the Department’s Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy, to be finalised July 2016.

Communities for Children (C4C)

- Provide prevention and early intervention activities and programs for families to bring about positive family functioning, safety and child development outcomes for children and their families in disadvantaged communities across Australia.
- Deliver services in two ways –
 - Communities for Children Facilitating Partner Services fund other organisations to provide services including parenting support; group peer support for children, families or carers; case management; home visiting services; and other supports to prevent child abuse and neglect. The services aim to develop a whole of community approach and strengthen local service networks that contribute to child safety.
 - Communities for Children Direct Services may include parenting support, family and peer support for children and family members. The services deliver early intervention and prevention family support, tailored to the needs of the local community.
- Aim to increase child safety and wellbeing by addressing known risk factors that impact on the parenting capacity of families, parents and carers. They support the wellbeing of children by building strong parenting skills and stronger and more sustainable families and communities.
- Target the provision of support and services for children from zero to 12 years, with some programs for those up to age 18.
- Are led by the community service sector in partnership with the Australian Department of Social Services. The Australian Government contracts community sector organisations as Facilitating Partners⁵ to lead the C4C initiative locally, including providing direct delivery of services and contracting out to fund other community sector organisations to provide services.
- Are delivered in 52 communities across Australia, including seven in Western Australia⁶ (Pilbara, Kimberley, Great Southern, Mirrabooka, Kwinana, Armadale and Swan).

⁵ The *Communities for Children Facilitating Partner Operational Guidelines*, Australian Government Department of Social Services. ensure service providers work in a nationally consistent, coordinated, and cooperative way by outlining key elements of service delivery, along with governance, support and reporting.

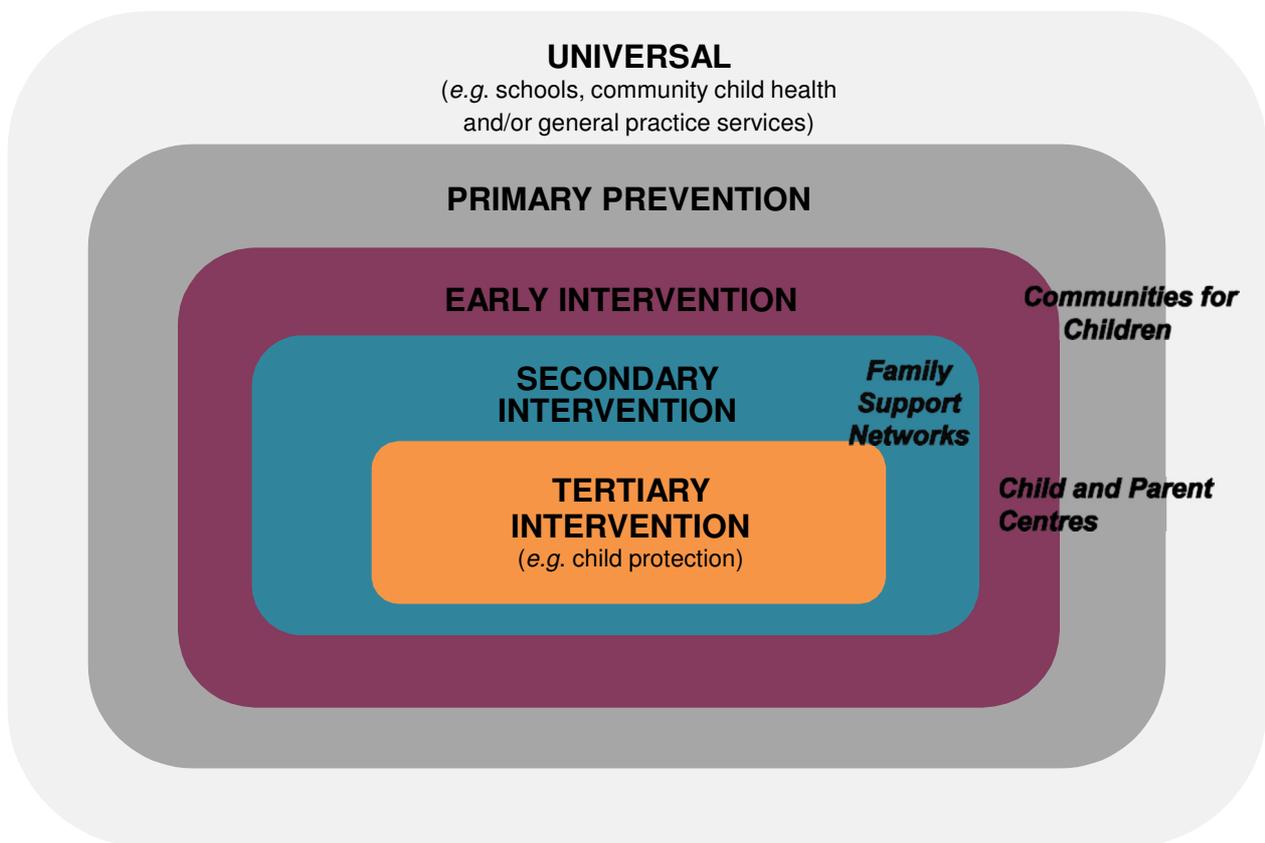
⁶ See Ngala, *Swan Alliance Communities for Children* website, <http://www.ngala.com.au/swanalliance> (accessed 25 July 2015).

Service provision and vulnerability continuum

Although the services and support provided by CPCs, C4C, and FSNs are complementary, each responds to families at different points along the continuum of service and risk (Figure 1). Primary or universal services respond to all people and are directed at addressing general and low risk social factors that contribute to people being at risk. These services can assist in preventing potential risks from escalating and contribute to reducing the need for more intensive support. Secondary services work with at risk individuals and families to reduce risk factors and prevent the need for tertiary intervention. Tertiary intervention is usually in the form of statutory intervention and responds to immediate and extreme risk that cannot be alleviated by providing secondary services.

The service continuum reflects differences among families and individuals in terms of the level of support needed. The required level of support may vary over time - with pathways from universal to more targeted services and back to universal platforms when issues improve or be resolved.

Figure 1: Service continuum



CPCs are focused on early intervention and engagement. They provide universal and primary prevention services targeted to families with young children. CPCs are proportionally targeted towards disadvantaged families in that the centres are located in disadvantaged communities with a higher concentration of developmentally vulnerable children, but the services and support are available universally. C4C services are also universal, although the target age range is slightly wider, zero to 12 years (with some programs for up to 18 year olds), and the objectives and services provided may vary.

FSNs have a focus on the provision of secondary support services for at risk families and individuals with needs and issues that are too complex for universal or even targeted services. A secondary response is needed to prevent the family's situation from worsening and entry to the child protection system.

FSNs are a point of referral for families where the issues being experienced (e.g. homelessness, family conflict, and/or mental health issues) increase the risk to children and are beyond the role and resources of CPCs and C4C.

Common and distinguishing features

Common features

- The CPCs, C4C and FSNs are:-
 - developed and designed based on the local needs of the communities they serve;
 - locally led by community service sector organisations in partnership with, and contracted by government - to deliver and coordinate programs that support children and families;
 - focused on working in consultation and collaboration with local stakeholders; and
 - targeted to be located in identified disadvantaged communities.
- Some of the CPCs, C4C, and FSNs are delivered by the same community service sector organisation (or have the same organisation(s) participating as partners in delivering services), resulting in cross collaboration and cooperation.

Distinguishing features

The CPCs, C4C and FSNs differ in key areas, including:

- *Target groups*

Although the target groups overlap – with all three programs providing support and services for young children up to eight years of age - the target groups of each program range from the more focused target of the CPCs (pre-birth to eight years old), to the slightly broader C4C (0 to 12 year olds, with some programs for up to 18 year olds), to the much broader focus of the FSNs (all ages of vulnerable children and families).
- *Source of funding and level of government*

CPCs and FSNs are state government funded initiatives that operate in Western Australia only; C4C is a federally funded program that operates throughout Australia.
- *Arrangements with community sector agencies*

CPCs, and FSNs involve the coordination of service delivery through a lead community sector agency; C4C has partnership funding that can be disbursed to organisations in the local community to deliver services and support.
- *Service provision continuum*

The programs provide services and support at different levels of the service provision continuum (see Figure 1) with CPCs and C4Cs delivering universal/primary level support and FSNs delivering secondary level support.
- *Date established*

The CPC initiative was endorsed in 2012 and the first CPC was officially opened in July 2014; the C4C initiative has been in operation since 2005; and the first FSN was established in February 2012.

Next Steps

Out of Home Care Reform

In 2014 the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, in partnership with the community services sector, embarked on a review of the out-of-home care system. The focus of this review was on how the out-of-home care system was achieving its core objective of providing high quality care while supporting children to have much improved life opportunities.

The result of this process was the release of the *Building a Better Future: Out-of-Home Care Reform in Western Australia* (Reform Plan) in April 2016. The Reform Plan identified 72 required actions and work has commenced to progress these. Following the release of the reform plan in April 2016, Cabinet endorsed drafting instructions for a Permanency Bill as legislation change was identified as a key reform action. The reforms will be implemented incrementally over a five year period.

Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy

The Department for Child Protection and Family Support is developing an Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy which aims to further coordinate how government and community sector agencies work with vulnerable families in the secondary and tertiary service arena.

There is scope for ongoing work and reform of the Family Support Networks as part of the Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy currently being developed. It is anticipated the Strategy will be finalised in July 2016.

References

The resources below were used in developing this paper.

Australian Government Department of Social Services, *Family and Children's Services* (website accessed February 2015), see www.dss.gov.au.

Department for Child Protection and Family Support, *Western Australian Family Support Networks Key Resources* (website accessed February 2015), see <http://www.wafsn.org.au/>

Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood Development and Learning, *Children and Family Centres* (website accessed February 2015), see <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/curriculum-support/earlychildhood/detcms/navigation/initiatives/children-and-family-centres/>

Department of Education, Department of Health, Department for Child protection and Family Support, and the Department of Local Government and Communities, *Letter of Agreement for the provision of programs and services at and through Child and Parent Centres* (2013).

Edith Cowan University [Whiteside, L., Barratt-Pugh, C., Barblett, L., Stamopoulos, E., Knaus, M. (Centre for Research in Early Childhood) and Targowska, A., and Teather, S. (Social Justice Research Centre)], *Child and Parent Centres on Public School Sites in Low Socioeconomic Communities in Western Australia: A Model of Integrated Service Delivery – Literature Review* (2013).

Ngala, *Swan Alliance Communities for Children* (website accessed July 2015), see <http://www.ngala.com.au/swanalliance>