# Moving Forward Together

**A guide to support
the integration of service delivery
for children and families**

The recent move towards integrated models of early childhood service delivery across Australia presents unique opportunities for babies, young children and their families, and poses an exciting challenge for entire communities. It presents an opportunity to do something extraordinary where, in years to come, future Australian generations will look back on this time and view it as a turning point in the way services are delivered for children and families.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

The recent move towards integrated models of early childhood service delivery across Australia presents unique opportunities for babies, young children and their families, and poses an exciting challenge for entire communities. It presents an opportunity to do something extraordinary where, in years to come, future Australian generations will look back on this time and view it as a turning point in the way services are delivered for children and families.

Yet, across Australia and in other countries, there are numerous examples of local early childhood services that freely use the words "collaboration" and "integration" while, in reality, they provide little more than a cluster of co-located services sharing resources. They are proof that little will change for children and their families unless real change occurs in the design and delivery of relevant early childhood services.

The term "Integrated Service Delivery" refers to the process of building connections between services in order to work together as one to deliver services that are more comprehensive and cohesive, as well as services being more accessible and more responsive to the needs of families and their children.

In order to create truly integrated services, connections between individuals must be present through every stage of the process. Success in building these connections is underpinned by the modelling of respectful and helpful relationships which must be reflected at all levels of service delivery.

However, it must be acknowledged that successful integration is a continual process. It takes time as it requires new ways of working and impacts on all aspects of service delivery including governance structures. This change will undoubtedly present great challenges for services, communities and governments, and ultimately requires significant change from individual workers.

This paper draws upon the early experiences of Tasmanian Child and Family Centres in creating integrated services for families and children across Tasmania, to draw attention to the change required in providing integrated services for children, families and communities.

This document aims to present a guide to bringing about this change with strategies that can be used to overcome challenges. This guide is designed to compliment existing resources that support the notion of service integration.

"Our community going somewhere"

Will Tinker
(4 years old)
Geeveston, TAS

2.Who is It for?

This document is a guide for all individuals, organisations, communities and governments undertaking the process of providing integrated services for children and families. It aims to support:

Parents and Community Members

in understanding the many possibilities and benefits for them that can result from the successful integration of services for children and families.

Service Providers

in considering and understanding the changes that will be required of their service and each individual practitioner in order to deliver services for families in a way that families receive the safest and best possible support from all services.

Community Interest Groups

interdisciplinary group of service providers and community members meeting together, in understanding the importance of genuine and broad engagement to ensure local ownership. It will also be helpful for them in anticipating stages on the journey towards change.

Government (Federal, State, Local)

in acknowledging that this significant change will demand very different ways of working in communities. To enable this change in practice, changes in policy and governance will inevitably be required.

3. HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This document may be used purely as a source of information about the scope of change required in moving towards the design and implementation of locally integrated services. It may also be considered as a checklist of useful steps / actions to undertake or anticipate on the journey.

Reflection can help in the building of relationships and in identifying what could or might be done differently as a result of what is discovered from the process of reflecting. Thinking about and reflecting on what we have done, and how we have done it can be a powerful tool in identifying future action.

Each section includes a series of questions to assist individuals or groups in exploring some of the more confronting issues that we must consider in order to change our practice for the benefit of children, their families and communities.

This type of reflection will encourage those involved to work towards a shared understanding and will also assist in the development of community / service partnerships.
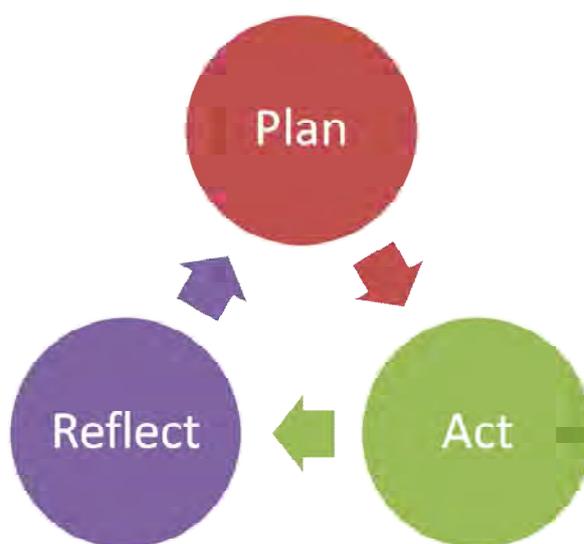
4. PARTNERSHIP: THE FOUNDATION FOR MOVING FORWARD

A mounting body of evidence points to the changing nature of children and families requiring new and distinctly different service responses. Families in many communities in Australia still only have access to early childhood and family support services that were designed to cater for family structures that were more common in past generations. Given that many services may still function in isolation from one another, there is an ever increasing number of families that miss out, or don't fit into these traditional service structures. Now, more than ever before, more flexible and inclusive service options are required for Australian families. For the benefit of our children, it is undeniable that the most helpful change would be reflected by services working in far more connected ways.

One of the most powerful ways to support sustainable change is to model what it is we want to achieve. If what we want is a truly integrated local service model, then both behaviour and processes at all levels need to reflect the values, beliefs and culture required to create a partnership with communities.

The Family Partnership Model (Davis, et al, UK, 2002) suggests there are fundamental characteristics of people who are effective in supporting families and communities to recognise their own potential. They include, but are not limited to, qualities such as respect, empathy, genuineness, humility, quiet enthusiasm and personal integrity. Modelling these qualities, when designing and implementing an integrated service model, will help create a collaborative culture for the services involved and the families who access them.

The following diagram illustrates the journey towards early childhood service integration with the key ingredients of partnership underpinning the process to ensure genuine integration.

A Journey Towards Early Childhood Service Integration

Services **individually** supporting families and children	Services **co-locating** for families and children	Services **collaborating** for families and children	Services **Integrated** for families and children

Child & Family

Service

Organisational values, culture, beliefs and behaviour

Modelling the attributes of partnership to support true integration
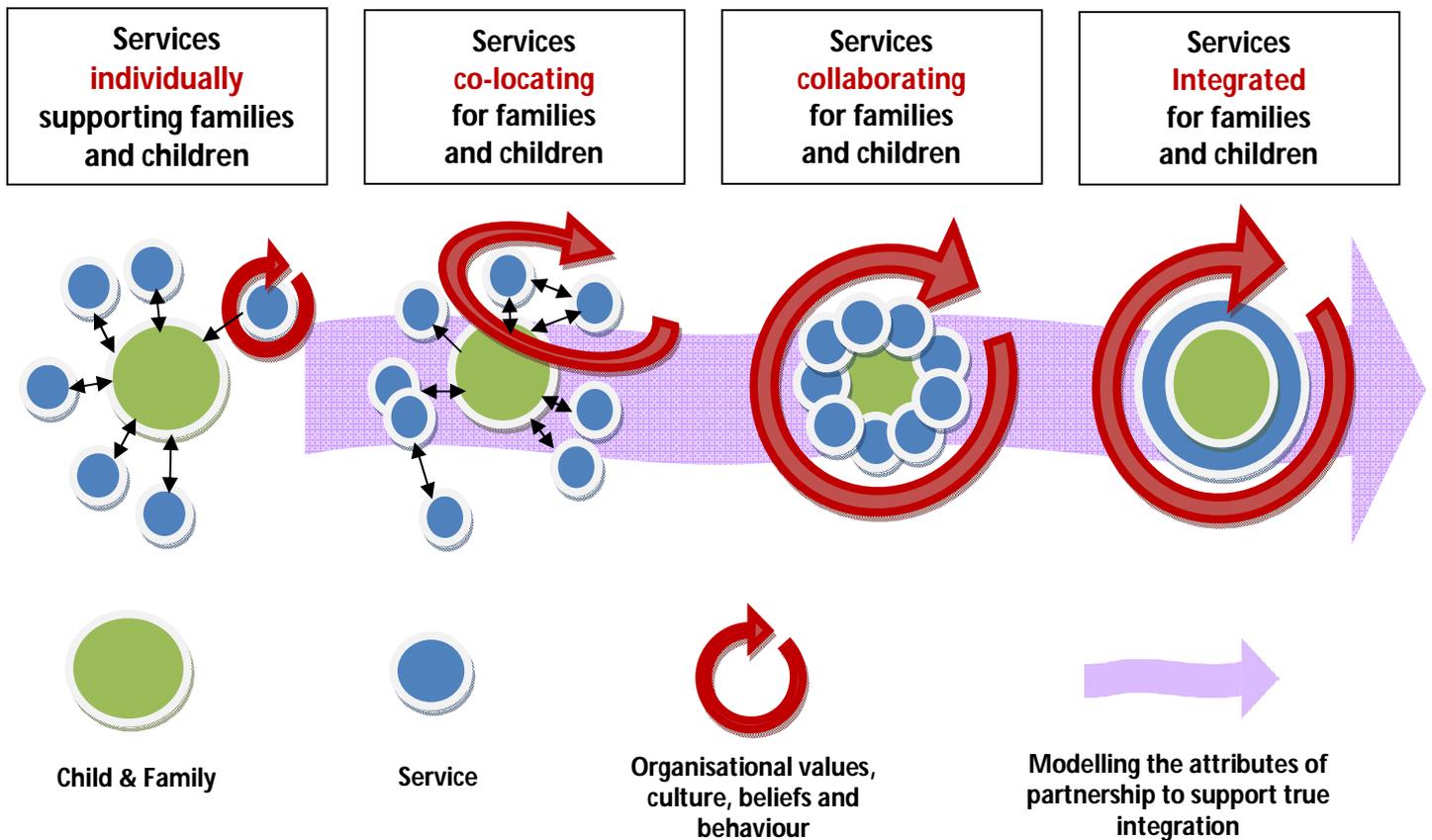
Child and Family Centres exhibit the attributes of ...

INDIVIDUALLY	CO-LOCATION	COLLABORATION	INTEGRATION
• Each program/service has developed their individual philosophy, vision and values • Each program/service has separate funding arrangements • Little communication occurs between each program/service	• Some joint planning has taken place but each service maintains their individual philosophy, vision and values • Services have engaged the community and are responding to community need separately. • Each program/service has separate funding arrangements	• A common culture, values and actions between multiple organisations sharing the same vision • All organisations have an open dialogue, have engaged the community and are responding collectively. • Some joint programming has required shared funding arrangements	• A shared philosophy and vision has been developed and formally agreed by all • Primary focus is the shared outcomes responding in a way that is meaningful to the community and reflective of partnership. • Pooled funding is administered for common early learning and care programs.
Many children miss out on access to services.	Families have improved access to services but little enhanced benefit for children due to poor inter-service collaboration.	Children benefit through increased inter-service collaboration	Families will receive support that addresses all aspects of their needs in a cohesive fashion.

4.1 MODELLING PARTNERSHIP

The process of integrating services requires a great deal from us as individuals, services, communities and governments. Any governing body or structure that has responsibility for the implementation of a collaborative project must firstly consider the critical importance of modelling collaborative processes and behaviours itself.

An integrated service model in any community will demand give and take on the part of all stakeholders. Given the nature of the change, and the shared commitment to enhance outcomes for children and their families, it will be very useful for all of those involved to openly discuss the nature of the relationship. This includes how achievements are celebrated and barriers and disagreement will be handled.

The very notion of integration demands that all involved negotiate to manage this responsibility in new and creative ways, promoting and modelling a relationship that enables helpful outcomes for children and families.

This process of negotiation could be challenging and perhaps even uncomfortable. Representatives of government and non government organisations, and their staff, will inevitably discover that truly integrated management processes need to reflect the ingredients of partnership.

Ingredients for partnership include: working together, power sharing, a common aim, mutual respect, complimentary expertise, open communication and negotiation.

This modelling of partnership, by service representatives and community members, will positively influence the culture within the new integrated service and be reflected in how they work with each other.

In the process of establishing a productive and genuine partnership with all stakeholders, we must seek clarity to the following three questions:

Why Change?

What to Change?

How to Change?

"We all come with different perspectives and it doesn't flow without effort. We are continually reviewing our purpose, checking expectations, seeking clarity. What is the purpose of the partnership? Why are we working together? What do you need from us and this is what we need from you? It can be as simple as who is cleaning up the space."
Ros (Social Worker)

REFLECTING ON PARTNERSHIP

How might my interaction with other stakeholders (parents, local service providers, senior government officials) reflect genuine partnership?

What will this look like?

What needs to change to show we are working together?

What needs to change for this relationship to reflect shared power?

"When I take my child to our local doctor, I always feel like there is no partnership because he does not seem very interested in who we are or what I have to offer. Sometimes I feel like it would be better I didn't go at all."
Tim (Parent)

5.WHY CHANGE?

The question *"why change?"* is one that needs to be clearly and collectively understood and answered by all parties involved. By international standards, families and communities in Australia are prosperous. However, a significant number of babies and young children are still experiencing relative disadvantage resulting in learning and speech delays and other impediments that are often characteristic of lack of contact with formal health and family-based services. We therefore have a duty to acknowledge that our system is failing these children and something needs to change.

Early in the journey, it is important for all local stakeholders (community members, service providers etc) to agree that change is warranted because of these outcomes. The well being of the child must be at the centre of every deliberation and decision. With the child firmly at the centre, service or individual agendas **must** be put to one side.

This common purpose and focus provides us with an agreement against which we can check back. It also provides us with a basic bottom line when compromise is required. We then have the ability to insist that the child be kept firmly at the centre of all deliberations, decisions and actions, even when circumstances say otherwise.

Agreement and understanding by all parties can be challenging to achieve. This can be supported more effectively when we build on a process of genuine community engagement and sharing a common language.

"Co-home visiting works very well when one member/service provider has a strong co-existing relationship with the family. The family often more readily accepts the introduction of a new service and it's easier to get things done. Everyone is working towards the same goals; there is shared responsibility, clear roles, and specialised skills. Case management is vital for coordinating, follow up, deciding on point for review, reflection."

Julia (Teacher)

"As a parent I felt valued and supported by my son's infant teacher. She helped me understand the importance of her being familiar with the other important people in his life like his brothers, his mum and his grandparents. She went out of her way to learn about them and how much they mean to him and she even visited us at home. This made me much more interested in what he was learning at school and I can see now how that made his learning even more fun. I felt like I was making a valuable contribution to the school. I even took time off work regularly to help out in the classroom."

Greg (Parent)

5.1 Connecting And Engaging Everyone

In identifying and agreeing on why change is needed, four key elements will support that change. These are:

- genuine community engagement,
- connecting the community,
- enabling and nurturing local leadership and,
- establishing a common language.

5.1.1. Genuine Community Engagement

Any group that gathers to reflect on and discuss options for changing the way services are delivered must do so in a way that is accessible to and inclusive of all parties, especially those who traditionally have not had a voice. In consulting with a community, we must be mindful of the fact that it is easy to hear the opinions and ideas of the most confident, socially mobile and articulate community members. What is far more time consuming and complex is hearing and understanding the experiences and hopes of those families that traditionally do not engage so readily with services. Ultimately, this is the very group we most need to engage and hear from.

Meaningful community engagement is often talked about as 'important' but is difficult to do well. At the forefront of every gathering that sets out to progress the concept of integrated service delivery, it is vital to consider and understand the importance of bringing together a group that is truly representative of the local community.

Consideration needs to be given to subtle things we often do that can, at best, send the wrong or unhelpful message, and, at worst, exclude the very individuals and the community we set out to serve and support. We must discipline ourselves to consider the 'effect' of what we do in attempting to engage and include community members.

"Don't start with what you think is a good idea for the community – start with what the community wants!"

Dr. Margy Whalley
on 'Community Engagement'

"As a dad who is not always available during working hours, it is a real privilege when services go out of their way to seek my ideas or opinions. I'm not one for focus groups or questionnaires but it feels very respectful when they call me and let me know how valuable my opinion is."

Jeremy (Parent)

REFLECTING ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Given we want all meetings to be accessible to and inclusive of a broad cross section of community members, how might we go about ensuring this is possible? What steps will we take?

How we choose space for these meetings: Are the meetings held in the community we are working with? (They should always be!) How will people get to the meeting? Do they need transport? Where do people park their cars? Is there a space for children? Do we need to provide child care?

How the meeting is held: How do we create an inclusive and welcoming meeting? Is it a conversational format with food, time for sharing and relationship development or is it agenda driven and business like ? Is the seating inclusive? Can everybody see each other?

Dress: What messages does my dress and personal conduct send to all participants?

Relationship development: How are new people introduced into the meeting? How do new people find out about the journey so far? Is there time for people to get to know each other? Do I stay around after meetings to chat with people and come to understand their stories and what they have to offer? Do I remember them and what they have shared with me? Can I seek their ideas and input outside of meetings? Who sets the agenda? Is language inclusive of all members?

Local ownership and direction: How are we supporting leadership development amongst local community representatives? Are we quietly enthusiastic that at some point this community may take more control and ownership of this project / model / centre? Is it possible for meetings and other gatherings to be driven and chaired by community members?

Change: How can I change to enable and maintain broad and meaningful community representation?

Partnership: How do we demonstrate partnership in this process?

Children at the centre: How do we demonstrate that the children and their families (especially those most marginalised) are firmly at the centre of the process?

5.1.2 Connecting the Community

Given the complexity of the task in bringing people together, it is important that an individual assumes the role of connecting people in the community—a community connector. This role will be pivotal in helping create change as the community moves through the integration process. The community connector can give greatest priority to ensuring the voice and opinions of those least often heard are listened to and acted upon. This role must be performed by a person with the attributes necessary to build and nurture a network of helpful relationships. They will need to have a strong commitment to community development principles and have the full support of all participating services and community representatives, as well as a great deal of independence and autonomy.

REFLECTING ON THE COMMUNITY CONNECTOR

What are the characteristics of an effective connector?

What skills, knowledge, values and attitudes would the community connector need to work effectively in our community?

What would this look like? How would these characteristics be displayed?

What are the benefits of the community connector being a local person or having significant local knowledge?

5.1.3 Enabling and Nurturing Local Leadership

People do not always live in the same community in which they work. Often people working in services (such as teaching, nursing, child care, neighbourhood houses, police etc) in one community, live in another community. Though they may be dedicated to the community where they work, the people who know the community best, are those who choose to call it home. Therefore, it makes most sense to invest in identifying and enabling local people to emerge as leaders in this exciting process. The notion of enabling others to lead implies that 'I' or 'we' are prepared to move into less controlling and more support-oriented roles. This in itself requires certain leadership attributes of the 'enablers' and asks those involved to share a vision and belief that is child, family and community focused.

As pointed out earlier, it is relatively easy to identify those community members who are considered local leaders. They are often quite prominent and they most often have well established outlets for their opinions to be clearly heard. These local leaders need to be valued and co-opted in the task of enabling other less prominent people who traditionally have not had a voice. This process can be complex and a high level of sensitivity is required. It is possible that an individual or group may find their voice and feel empowered to assume local leadership roles to the detriment of others. How all involved handle and view "power" can have a significant impact (positive or negative) on the overall process and outcome.

The most powerful examples of emerging leadership might be in the blossoming of a previously disempowered person who, with appropriate support, education and mentorship, discovers skills, abilities and confidence they previously did not know they had. Such an empowering discovery has the potential to be life-changing for them, their friends and family. The living example of such change models the possibility of change for others.

Early in the life of the process, it must be considered a priority to ensure community members are supported to assume roles that are meaningfully representative of the local community. It is very important that these roles are genuinely valuable and not tokenistic.

"I've seen community members grow from looking oppressed or disempowered to taking on leadership roles in their community just because one or two people showed them they believe in them. It is amazing to watch people bloom and grow beyond what they would have ever thought possible just because others treat them with respect and support them to discover new opportunities and new ways of doing things."

Daniel (Service Provider)

REFLECTING ON NURTURING LOCAL LEADERSHIP

What are the characteristics of an empowering local community process?

What actions might need to be taken to properly support community members to develop leadership potential in this community?

What models of adult learning and skill development will be employed to support emerging leadership?

"Being an integral part of the process and being allowed to have my say was very important and made me feel like what I had to say meant something and my opinion was valued."

Kristy (Parent)

5.1.4 A Common Language

A common stumbling block in any major change process is a group's failure to give sufficient time and energy to developing a shared understanding and common language. We sometimes fail to consider that we all arrive at our own, often quite different, interpretations of what we see and hear. We make sense of things, or construe things, in different ways. This process is heavily determined by our own individual life and work experiences. It is the case that we might belong to a committee or group where all the members use the same words but attribute different meaning to those words. If we take, for example, the words "service integration" - seeking definition of the term from group members may result in radically different interpretations ranging from "services co-locate in one building" through to "services develop a new model of practice across disciplines and form one local governance entity". This point highlights that throughout any change process we need to devote time to ensure we have a common understanding of the intent of the new model. We can do this by reflecting, discussing and checking to ensure everyone is clear where we are going, how we plan to get there, and what we are doing.

When funding is announced for a community to develop an integrated service model, the temptation might be to quickly jump into discussion and planning around the building of a physical structure – a "centre". In the ideal scenario, this discussion would be preceded by serious consideration by all stakeholders (community members, service providers, funders, policy makers) at all levels, in developing a shared understanding and common language about integration and what it asks of the whole community. Importantly, the first step must be that the community supports the reason for this funding being directed towards their community.

In some cases, the political imperative and time frames may not afford a community the privilege of putting such reflection and agreement before discussion about a physical building. In this case, reflection and discussion around 'doing things differently', and developing a shared understanding, deserves to be viewed as an equally important concurrent process.

> **REFLECTING ON DEVELOPING A COMMON LANGUAGE**
>
> What is integration?
>
> Do we agree on a common definition of key terms?
>
> Do we share a common understanding of those definitions?
>
> How do we describe what the future service model and service delivery looks like and is this shared and understood by everyone involved?
>
> What type of support might our group need to develop a common language?

6. WHAT TO CHANGE?

Now that we have highlighted the challenges faced in understanding why change is needed, we can build on those experiences and understandings to examine the question of "What needs to change?"

It is now widely understood that communities and services must become more inclusive and supportive of all families and offer services that directly respond to the needs of local families. We also know that children and families benefit most from services working collaboratively.

Some communities which are considering the implementation of an integrated service model (eg, isolated rural communities) might conclude that it is not just a change in service provision that is needed but rather that it would be helpful if services were accessible in the first place. Such communities are not likely to be completely void of early childhood services but the nature of current service provision (drive-in or fly-in locums or only home- based support) might exacerbate the feeling of isolation or inaccessibility. An integrated service model for this type of community, with use of a physical, purpose built "centre", may create the added impression of something *NEW* as opposed to a change in the way services are delivered. For other communities (those that currently have multiple available services), the effect of a service integration project may not be so much in the delivery of something new but rather evidence of increased benefit to children and families through services working more effectively together. What this will look like in reality will vary from community to community.

Often services view family difficulty and dysfunction as an intergenerational problem that is complex and difficult to break. It may be worth considering that the way our services have traditionally been provided actually contributes to these difficulties. This clearly puts the onus back on to services to accept that it is not only families that need to change.

6.1 WHERE ARE WE NOW? IDENTIFYING THE CURRENT SITUATION

In order for a community to identify and understand what change needs to happen, it also needs to first understand its current situation and available resources. Useful tools for this process include:

1. **The facilitation of a local skills and resource audit.**
   Gathering information around what physical resources (services, buildings, equipment, available dollars), people (workers and interested community members, and skills) are currently present in the community, is a useful exercise in understanding how much local resource already exists.

2. **Analysis of available data sources and the story they tell about the community.**
   In every Australian state and territory, a range of data is available for most communities that helps pull together a picture of how families are fairing. The Australian Early Years Development Index (AEDI) is a good example of such a data resource. (For more information about the AEDI, visit www.rch.org.au/aedi.)

REFLECTING ON THE CURRENT SITUATION

The following considerations are also very useful in gathering relevant information.

How things are now: What is happening now for families in our community? How does the way that services currently operate support or hinder the needs of all children? What groups of families currently do not access our services? Why? What do they think about our services and how might services need to change to be more accessible?

Current delivery of services: What services currently exist in this community that directly provide support to families with babies and young children? What services in this community provide indirect support to that same group? How do we deliver our services to families? How does current service delivery support a truly respectful and accessible model for families who are experiencing a variety of complex needs?

6.2 WHAT IS OUR DREAM? DEVELOPING A SHARED VISION

In order to identify what they want to achieve, it is important for any group to consider "where are we going?" In other words "what is our vision?" Put simply, if we were to jump into the future, what would things look like for children in our community as a result of this integrated service delivery project? Our vision, that must be shared and agreed upon by all stakeholders, can be an aspirational statement (ie. we aspire to get there but it may not be immediately achievable). The vision states clearly, for all to see, our dream for the future around what could be possible.

A vision can be created through a reflective exercise considering the following:

- If we were to wave a magic wand and it is now 10 years on, things are really working for children and families as a result of this project. What has happened? Why?

- Imagine, what is possible?

- What do we hope to achieve?

- What will be different?

- What would success look like for this project?

Important Reminders:

☐ *It is important to establish a vision for the strategic planning implementation process (outcomes; strategies; action plan).*

☐ *Create a picture of where the service will end up and the anticipated outcome(s).*

☐ *Make certain the picture is one of reality and captures your passion.*

☐ *Make sure everyone knows 'why' the service is changing.*

Centre for Community Child Health, (2009). **Platforms – A Service Redevelopment Framework**

REFLECTING ON DEVELOPING A SHARED VISION

Why change what we are currently doing?

Where are we hoping to get to?

What will it look like in our community?

What will the resulting change ask of all players?

To what extent might I have to change from what I currently do?

What type of support might our group need to develop a shared vision?

6.3 WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE? IDENTIFYING OUTCOMES

Any government or other funding source that is investing financial and human resource into supporting practice change, will have put significant time and energy into identifying exactly what it is they want to achieve. This statement or framework might be presented in different ways but will have clear overarching outcomes that need to be achieved.

How we achieve these outcomes will start to make more sense when we plan locally. Creating a local plan is useful in developing a shared agreement of what communities may need to do to achieve the identified outcomes.

In doing this planning, it may be helpful to call on the support of a facilitator from outside the group. Such facilitation is likely to be helpful in ensuring that a local plan is realistic and achievable.

"Talking with service providers about change, and doing things differently in order to support different outcomes for children, is always exciting and we seem to share the same exciting vision. I have a feeling though that the practice (doing things differently down the track) will be more complex than any of us might be able to imagine."

Toby (Service Provider)

REFLECTING ON OUTCOMES

What do the overarching outcomes of the project actually mean to us locally?

How might we start to develop our own local plans which supports this?

How do we make sure that the process of developing a local plan, engages the local community and is relevant to them?

What will the local plan ask of us?

6.4 WHAT DO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES REALLY NEED? IDENTIFYING SERVICES TO BE DELIVERED

Most communities have a number of early childhood organisations providing services in the best way they know how to support children's care, education, health and well-being. The type of services, and the way these services are provided, varies from community to community. Very often, even when they are provided under the same roof, these services are delivered in relative isolation to each other and often governed and funded by separate entities.

In the process of dreaming and visioning "what might be" for a community in a new integrated service model, a useful way of approaching this is to consider what babies, young children and their families ideally need to ensure the best possible outcomes for the child. It might be helpful to approach this task with the view of "*regardless of what currently exists, or is not available in our community, what do children need and deserve?*", rather than "*I need to make sure my service is named up in the mix*".

This type of view should help us arrive at creative answers that don't suggest typical or traditional service models and the way we view and understand them. So instead of the usual list of: Child Health Nurse, Child Care, Kinder, GP, Playgroup, etc, we are challenged to really think of the ideal types of support and how they might be provided. In doing this, we hopefully come to see that practitioners across service types have to work far more collaboratively in order to achieve the future picture we have in mind for our community.

As with every component of the integrated model of service delivery, ensuring QUALITY service provision needs to be among the highest considerations. Far more important than how much we provide or even what we provide, is the quality of what we offer families. Quality is not something that is necessarily determined by the amount of funding available but rather the design, planning and personnel involved in the process. Quality is also reflected in service delivery, culture and the modelling of respectful and helpful relationships.

REFLECTING ON WHAT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES REALLY NEED

Regardless of what currently exists, or does not exist, in our community, what do children need and deserve from a local service model? (dare to dream a little but keep it realistic and achievable!)

How might these things be provided to maximise access to all families?

What needs to be done to ensure that all components of the integrated service model reflect quality?

6.5 HOW SHOULD IT LOOK? DETERMINING THE FORM OF INTEGRATION

Integrated service models vary according to a number of factors, including local governance options. The resulting model created will depend on the extent to which local early childhood services are ready and able to change. The level and intensity of service integration reflected in a community may change over time. In the beginning, given the significant change required, it may be more practical or reasonable for a community to aim for a model reflective of "collaboration" with a view to moving forward to a truly integrated service model over time. However, if services are moving into a building together, the aim should be for the elements of true integration to be in place when service delivery begins. In other words, a cultural shift (towards integration) has to happen prior to moving in, otherwise the new building may be the only change that occurs.

Here are some examples and distinguishing characteristics of different forms of integration suggested by "Platforms: A Service Redevelopment Framework" (2009). Centre for Community Child Health .

- **a 'virtual' services hub** in which the parties involved coordinate and collaborate service delivery without co-locating or becoming a single organisation

- **a core services hub** in purpose-built premises, with outreach services to isolated or vulnerable families provided by a 'virtual' service partnership

- a number of services relinquishing their independent status and becoming part of a **new service** (which may or may not be located in a single purpose-built premises).

REFLECTING ON THE FORM OF INTEGRATION

Who should be involved in determining the form of integration that best suits our community?

What form of integration best suits our community?

How will we realistically get to this point?

What needs to be done to enable our preferred form of integration?

6.6 WHO'S IN CHARGE? GOVERNANCE

The concept of integrated service responses relies on the expectation that communities are empowered to take control and responsibility for the design, implementation, and even governance of the new service model. There are a number of possible models of governance that might be considered ranging from simply a local advisory structure to the ultimate governance entity that assumes responsibility for the local service model and all its staff, activities etc.

In any community, there may already be organisations or management structures that consider themselves likely candidates for this responsibility. However, ultimately it is the community that needs to be actively involved in determining what the governance structure will look like and how it will function. There are communities in Australia where serious negotiation and compromise across local services has occurred resulting in existing services amalgamating to form a local governance entity for the benefit of the community. In this case, there has been a very clearly understood and shared vision about what they wanted to the point that the community could navigate its way through serious and complex compromise and negotiation to arrive at the model that is most suitable for local families. The steps taken in establishing this shared vision can also be used to create a governance structure that reflects a genuine partnership between the community and organsiations tasked with the delivery of the new integrated service model.

REFLECTING ON GOVERNANCE

What is governance?

What are the governance options for the centre in our community?

Which governance model best suits our community? Why?

What needs to happen to make this option a reality for our community?

7. HOW TO CHANGE?

As noted earlier in this paper, the change required to implement an integrated early years service model is significant. The journey for any community poses challenges but the potential outcomes for children and families could be great. In order to embrace this task, a community will need passionate, dedicated, leadership to champion the cause. These champions need to be innovators and creators. Their enthusiasm and vision should be firmly fixed on the best outcomes for children and shared by all those involved. A "can do" attitude must prevail in order to challenge and overcome any barriers that present themselves along the way.
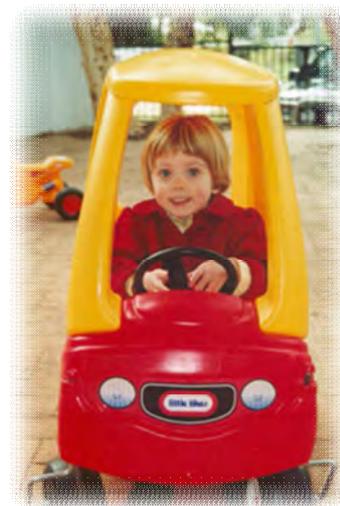
7.1 SUPPORTING PRACTICE CHANGE

A locally integrated service model requires changes in the way many organisations offer their services to families. Considering the fact that the new model asks services to share a common service framework, information, culture, governance structure, budget, we can only start to imagine the significance of the change this model may ask of the individual workers, many of whom, are currently used to working in relative isolation from other services. This change will be embraced by some and others will find the change required too confronting. Moving towards working differently will be challenging and services (both government and non-government) need to be ready to provide considerable support to workers in order to facilitate this change and continue to balance current service demand. The practice change required will also necessitate that some organisations implement changes in policy and provide necessary professional development opportunities for front line workers.

An essential part of this change needs to be the provision of ongoing professional learning opportunities to assist individuals and their services to understand the complexity of the change required, and recognise what needs to happen to enable the change.

"Common training – we've all done Family Partnership Training and have a common language. It is important that every member of the team has access to the opportunity to the professional learning to help them in their role in the team. Just because they are a teacher assistant doesn't mean they can miss out or be overlooked. "

Julia (Teacher)

7.2 WHAT ELSE IS OUT THERE?

It is important to point out that many resources and tools are available for individuals and communities to assist in addressing some of the steps suggested throughout this document. Examples (of such resources) include: tools for conducting a community audit; planning, implementation and evaluation tools for local initiatives, and tools to assist in developing understanding of the process of change towards genuine integration. Other useful resources could include: the use of an external and independent facilitator to assist groups in negotiating their way through more complex issues involving compromise and agreement.

If these types of resources and supports are not familiar to readers, there are government project teams, in most jurisdictions, that exist to support the implementation of integrated service models. These offices may be a useful starting point in identifying where such resources may be found and how best to access and use them.

8. CONCLUSION

The journey towards integrated service delivery is challenging and will take a significant level of commitment from government, services and communities. But the rewards of our collective efforts can create incredible opportunities for babies, young children, their families and entire communities. We have the opportunity to do something extraordinary where, in years to come, future Australian generations will look back on this time and view it as a turning point in the way services are delivered for children and families.

Key ingredients that are imperative to a successful journey are:

- *The CHILD is always at the centre of any discussion/work and the understanding that, in most cases, parents are that child's main teacher,*

- *The process is underpinned by the building of quality relationships and partnerships,*

- *Modelling the way we want things to be,*

- *Genuinely engaging the community and all parties involved, and*

- *The use of reflective practice to facilitate change.*

9. REFERENCES

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