Working Together to Secure our Children’s Future

Plunket and VHT Delivering flexible services to families with diverse needs

OUR PURPOSE
- To work in partnership with families to ensure a child is healthy and can learn well at school.
- Late 2015 Plunket and Waitemata DHB collaborated to provide a comprehensive and timely service.

WHAT WE WANTED TO DO
- Improve access to services for families with diverse needs
- Reduce health disparities by developing a trusting open partnership with families
- Engage with Maori, Pacific and families with low socioeconomic status to ensure services meet their children’s needs
- Allow children the best chance of addressing health needs by encouraging families to have the B4 school check soon after their 4th birthday

WHAT WE DID
- ‘One stop shop’ - working together with combined home visiting and clinics with VHT and Plunket
- Improved communication between VHT and Plunket to ensure a seamless delivery of the B4 school service
- We prioritised children who don’t attend an Early Childhood Education facility
- Health promotion days within communities with diverse needs
- Providing choices for families - clinics, home visits, Saturday clinics for working parents
- Meeting the needs of the community by regular auditing of clinics and home visits and if required, making the necessary changes so that we continue to provide a worthwhile flexible service

HOW WE MADE A DIFFERENCE
- More Maori, Pacific and high needs families have been able to access B4 school checks for their children
- Timeliness has improved with most children seen just after their 4th birthday - allows early intervention and better start at school
- Working in partnership with Pacific Island language nests
- Increased job satisfaction reported “Not only are we better supporting families by working together, we are also supporting each other. We feel like we are making a difference”
- Positive feedback from families “It’s a really thorough check and it’s great, we can have it all done at the same time”
- “Take the service to the people” - supporting families with limited or no transport
- Improved outcomes for children means better learning when they start school
- Improved referrals to agencies such as Ministry of Education, Auckland Regional Dental Service, Family Doctors, Marinoto, Parenting Programmes eg ‘Incredible Years’
- Better public awareness of what the B4 school check is all about. Raising our profile in the community by attending Health Promotion Days and networking with other agencies within the community

THE CHALLENGES WE FACED
- Culturally diverse population with a range of specific needs - language, cultural practices
- Transient families have difficulty accessing both components of the check (nursing and vision and hearing assessments)
- Providing a suitable space for the check, especially the vision and hearing component. This can be a challenge when home visiting. Clinics require 2 rooms and a child friendly waiting area
- Lack of public awareness that the check has a nurse and VHT component - check often not completed
- National database does not list phone numbers or connect with other agencies so information can be shared and thus provide specific support for families

CONCLUSION
- Strong relationships across teams
- Increased overall coverage by 25%
- Increased coverage of Maori by 44%, Pacific 38% and high needs families by 22%

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