











"Children are the priority. Change is the reality. Collaboration is the strategy." —

Judith Billings Washington State Superintendent



#### Relationship to other government strategies and frameworks

This framework has been developed within the context of other plans, frameworks and strategies that are in place or currently under development, including the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020, An Outline of National Standards for Out-of-Home Care.* 

Figure 5: Related government plans, frameworks and strategies

Reducing the alcohol and drug toll -Victoria's plan 2013–2017

A new Mental Health Act for Victoria

Action Plan to Address Violence Against Women and Children Victorian Homelessness Action Plan 2011–2015

Key target: by 2023 the gap in the rate of Aboriginal and non Aboriginal child protection will be reduced by 75% 15 point plan to tackle alcohol and drug misuse

Sets new directions in treatment services Patients are involved and supported to make treatment decisions

Improved patient, family and carer experience of compulsory treatment Early intervention when risk of violence

Supporting women and children and tougher on perpetrators Providing support early so people don't become homeless

Flexible service provision to meet needs of individuals

#### VICTORIA'S VULNERABLE CHILDREN STRATEGY

#### New directions for school leadership and the teaching profession

Victorian Health Priorities Framework 2012–2022 Victorian State Disability Plan 2013–2016 Victorian Early Childhood Development Strategy

Improving quality of teaching the key to improving education outcomes

Effective professional development

Build leadership at school and system levels Seven priority areas including:

Responsiveness to needs

Improving health status

Expanding service, workforce and system capacity

Financial sustainability and productivity

Better opportunities in education and early childhood development services

Improved housing and accommodation services

Better pathways to employment and participation in community Strong focus on improving outcomes for vulnerable children

Strengthening prevention and early intervention through Maternal Child Health Reform

Trialling new initiatives to better support vulnerable families

Expansion of targeted early intervention services



A definition of 'vulnerability' was adopted by the Victorian Government, and set out in the Victoria's Vulnerable Children – Our Shared Responsibility Strategy 2013–2022 as:

'Children and young people are vulnerable if the capacity of parents and family to effectively care, protect and provide for their long-term development and wellbeing is limited'.



# Collaboration and improving outcomes for vulnerable families and children - between the universal, secondary and tertiary services

## 5 minutes 4 Successes, 1 challenge!

Chris Widdicombe

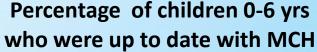
MCH Team Leader Greater Shepparton City Council

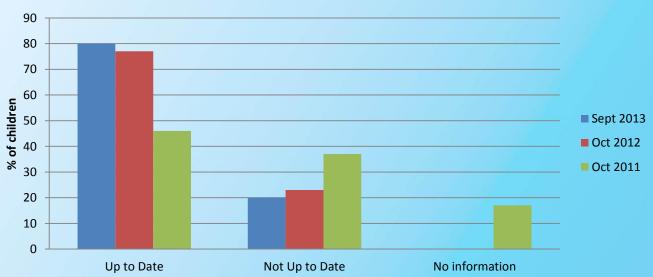
MCH Conference October 2015



### Success 1 - MCH Outreach and joint visits

Enhanced Best Start ChildFIRST Data Collection Report September 2013







## Success 2 – Child and Family Vulnerability Guide

#### Child and Family Vulnerability Guide Maternal & Child Health Services



The primary purpose of this Guide is to facilitate a common understanding of the dimensions of vulnerability for Maternal & Child Health Nurses, in regard to identifying and documenting child and/or family vulnerability. It is designed to inform the use of 'vulnerability/risk alert' function/sontained in the current MCH client data systems.

When utilizing this Guide please consider the following information

- The dimensions of child and family vulnerability are wide ranging and complex and must always be considered in conjunction with corresponding protective factors.
- The five categories of vulnerability and indicative reasons on side 2 have been drawn from current research with input from practitioners.
- The existence of one or more vulnerability factors does not necessarily mean that a child is vulnerable. It is the intensity and combination of such factors that potentially place a child at risk of developmental vulnerability, in association with the balancing protective factors.
- Consideration of such a balance contributes to professional judgment as to whether a child is
  experiencing a 'high level of vulnerability', a 'moderate level of vulnerability' or is
  considered to be 'developmentally on track'. These three levels described on side 2 broadly
  alien to the terminology used within the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC).
- The step by step method for using the Guide in association with Xpedite or MaCHs is set out in the Greater Shepparton Best Start Vulnerability Guide Tool Kit January 2015.
- . Instructions are set out for both adding and removing a vulnerability alert.

#### Other benefits of the Guide

- The Vulnerability Guide has also been developed to promote consideration of when additional support is required to foster positive outcomes for children and families, and what action needs to be taken to respond to identified vulnerability issues.
- Practitioners may consider that a child or family could be in need of additional support due to
  a short term emergency situation, a medium term set of circumstances in which their needs
  cannot be met from within their own resources and networks, or an ongoing, complex
  situation which would be assisted by a range of longer term strategies.
- Common definitions may also assist in communicating with external organisations such as ChildFirst.
- Greater consistency in the application of a vulnerability alert will result in improved data reliability and generation of reports which can assist in identifying which families are most in need of MCH support.

Please turn over

This Child & Family Vulnerability Guide has been developed by the Greater Shepparton Best Start Program Version date: 31.3.2015

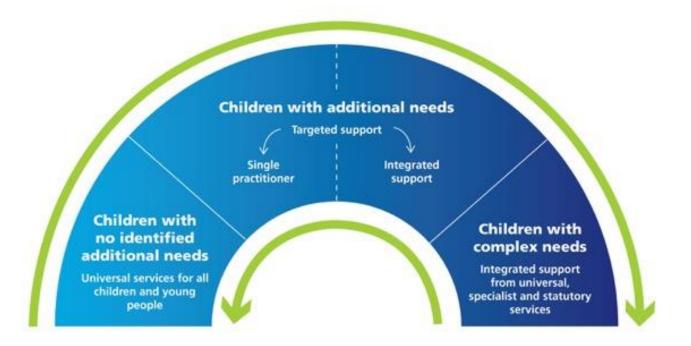
- Communication tool for discussing child vulnerability and protective factors
- Annual data audit stimulates review of vulnerability status – contact with other agencies, use of FamilyCare protocol
- Tracking vulnerable families who have not enrolled for kindergarten
- Plan to extend use of this Guide to child care and supported playgroups

## Success 3 – Stronger collaboration

- Vulnerable Children Meetings
- Best Start Early Years Partnership and Workgroups
   Early Years Reference Group current focus on:
  - information sharing and communication
  - Child social and emotional wellbeing
  - concept of progressive universalism



#### Progressive Universalism – a continuum of child needs and service integration



Original concept: www.everychildmatters.gov.au - now archived

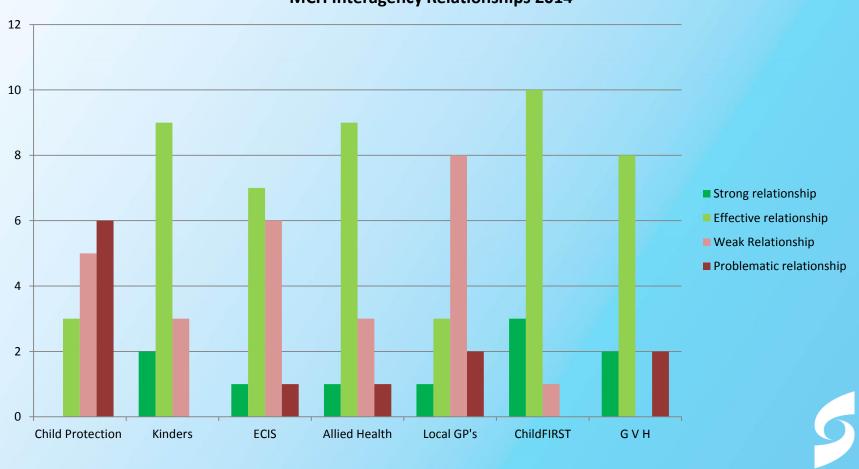
Adapted by the Greater Shepparton Best Start Team November 2014

## Success 4 – Integrated Practice Training

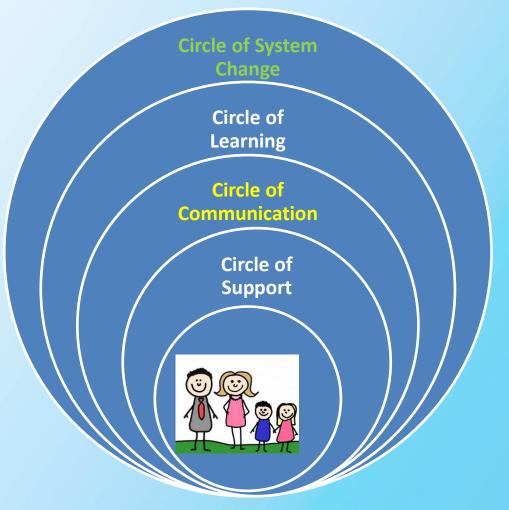
- Professional development resource developed by Greater Shepparton Best Start Program
- Key concepts of family centred practice, understanding child and family vulnerability/protective factors and professional relationship building
- Core training for all Council early years staff
- Offered annually over 2 days and delivered by local senior practitioners
- Co-ordination and ongoing development is a collaboration between Council, FamilyCare (ChildFIRST) and Berry St

## 1 Challenge – improving connectivity with Child Protection

#### MCH Interagency Relationships 2014



## It takes a systems approach



Every child enjoys the best possible start in life



## What's the beauty of collaboration and Council led Community Development Working Groups?

Children Services Coordinator is responsible for allocating priority places places through Kindergarten Central Enrolment for vulnerable children and Networking with Kindergarten Committees of Management and other Early Years Service providers.

**Enhanced Maternal and Child Health** 

Nurses work with vulnerable families and visit Public Housing Estates regularly. They also work in partnership with Family Life facilitating Supported Playgroups.

Library Services visit Supported
Playgroups and facilitate activities for
children. Outreach Service is provided to
Public Housing Estates fortnightly in the
Estates community rooms. Link families into
Early Years Services, Maternal and Child
Health, Kindergarten and Child Care

Family Life and Bentleigh Bayside
Community Health work closely with
Child First and Child Protection providing
Parenting Support, allied health services
and counselling to families identified as
"At Risk". Provides for interorganisational
referral practices to other Early years
Services.

**Community Partnerships Coordinator** 

engages families through organising events on Public Housing Estates and building relationships with Office of Housing and Family Support Agencies



## We first met 3 year old Megan at the Family Fun Day

Community Partnerships Officer working the Coordinator Children's Services received permission from The Office of Housing to hold an event at Kenneth St Housing Estate. This is where we met Megan and her family.

#### **Maternal and Child Health and Immunisation**

Megan had missed her 2 year KAS visit, wasn't up-to-date with her immunisations and was not attending any child care or kindergarten services. The Enhanced Maternal and Child Health Nurse was able to organise an outreach visit to immunise Megan and her little sister and complete the Key Ages and Stage Assessment.

#### **Family Life**

Family Life were at the event and linked Megan's younger sister and her mother into the Community Bubs Parenting Support Program and made a Child First referral. Megan and her family also have started attending the Keith St Playtime Buddies Supported Playgroup, co-facilitated by Family Life and Enhanced Maternal and Child Health Service.

#### Libraries

Megan loved the story time activities run by libraries at the event and Mum was given some books and some guidance on reading to her children

#### **Coordinator Children's Services**

Megan wasn't attending any Child Care Service or Kindergarten Program. We were able to assist Megan's mum in applying for Early Start Kindergarten and she was provided with a priority place at a local Kindergarten



























### Working Together Initiative



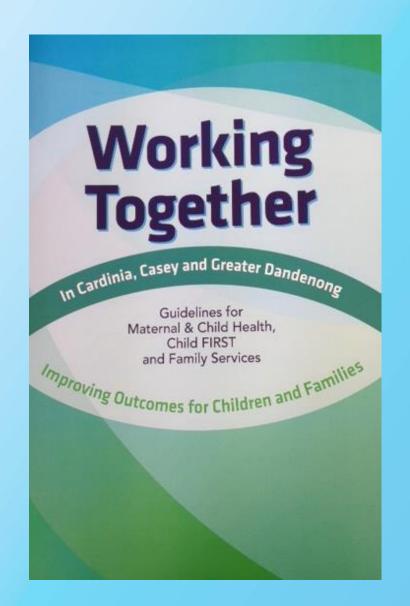
foster links with early childhood services



### Working Together Initiative

A resource was developed for each service:

- •Outlining the service provision
- Roles and responsibilities
- Referral pathways and guides
- Workforce exchange project:
  - Professionals working together for a day
  - Improved understanding
  - Better Communication
  - Collaborative partnerships





## Thank you!







