

Start, Develop and Learn Well Working Group

Setting the foundations and achieving our full potential

September 2016

On 15 September 2016, the Queensland Mental Health Commission and the Department of Education and Training (DET) co-hosted the first meeting of the Start, Develop and Learn Well (Start and Develop Well) Working Group.

The working group brings together government agencies and their non-government partners to support the implementation of the *Early Action: Queensland Mental Health Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention Action Plan 2015–17*, through a focus on child and youth mental health and wellbeing.

The first meeting comprised representatives from:

- Queensland Mental Health Commission
- Department of Education and Training
- Aftercare headspace
- Arts Queensland
- Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service - Child and Youth Mental Health Service (CYMHS)
- Create Foundation
- Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP)
- Department of Justice and Attorney-General - Youth Justice Policy and Programs (DJAG)
- Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (DCCSDS)
- Families and Communities Council of Queensland
- Kids Helpline
- Logan Together
- Multicultural Youth Queensland
- Peakcare Queensland Inc.
- Primary Healthcare Network
- Principals Australia Institute
- Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health (QCPIMH)
- Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC)
- Independent Schools Queensland
- Queensland Independent Schools Network

- Queensland University of Technology Centre for Youth Substance Abuse Research (QUT)
- The Federation of Parents & Friends Associations of Catholic Schools in Queensland.

An overview was provided of current strategies, practices and research on improving the mental health and wellbeing of Queensland children and youth. Discussion focused on what is being done well for mental health and wellbeing of children and youth in Queensland, what needs to be done better, and what role the working group can play.

Strategic priorities in mental health and wellbeing in Queensland communities

Carmel Ybarlucea, Executive Director, Queensland Mental Health Commission, set the scene outlining Queensland Government priorities with implications for how we support the mental health and wellbeing of children and youth in Queensland. The key points included:

- an overview of the policy context including the *Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014–2019* (the Strategic Plan), action plans to support the Strategic Plan, and the review of these policy documents
- the preparation of the *Annual Implementation Report 2015–2016* as part of the Commission's annual report on implementation of the Strategic Plan
- the role of the Performance Indicators Report in measuring the collective impact of work being done to support good mental health and wellbeing
- the role of the Working Group in providing advice and identifying current and future priorities to improve mental health and wellbeing, and reduce the impact of mental illness in infants, children and young people.

The [Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014–2019](#) seeks to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders through a focus on:

- better services
- better awareness, prevention and early intervention

Early action Queensland Mental Health Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention Action Plan 2015–17

- better engagement and collaboration
- better transparency and accountability.

A series of whole-of-government action plans have been developed to support the Strategic Plan, including [Early Action: Queensland Mental Health Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention Action Plan 2015–17](#). *Start Well* and *Develop and Learn Well* are two of five priority areas identified in this Action Plan.

Start Well focuses on the early years and the importance of supporting infants and young children to thrive; supporting parents, families and caregivers as coaches for positive mental health and wellbeing during this life stage; and taking early and effective action when children and families are experiencing risk for poor mental health and mental illness.

Develop and Learn Well focuses on childhood and adolescence and emphasises the importance of supporting parents, families and carers to promote good mental health and wellbeing; building the capacity of schools, health and other services to support mental health and wellbeing; and the early detection and intervention of mental health problems and illness in children and young people.

Working Groups for the *Live Well*, *Age Well* and *Work Well* priority areas are also being convened; as well as the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing Reference Group* and *Queensland Rural and Remote Mental Health and Wellbeing Reference Group*. The importance of ensuring communication across the groups was acknowledged.

Responding to the mental health and wellbeing needs of children and young people: Queensland Government agency perspectives

Representatives from key Government agencies provided an overview of what was working well and what could be done better in supporting child and youth mental health and wellbeing.

Department of Education and Training

Penny Creamer, Director, Children and Family Programs outlined DET's role in regulating the quality of early childhood education and care services for infants and children up to school age and supporting kindergarten participation. It was highlighted that:

- Over 95 per cent of Queensland children attend kindy programs

- DET funds wrap-around services for families through integrated models of delivery
- DET seeks opportunities for early childhood education and services to support to families, particularly where domestic and family violence, as well as challenging behaviours impact on children's wellbeing and learning.

Jean Smith, Executive Director, Student Wellbeing outlined key initiatives DET has undertaken to support child and youth mental health and wellbeing:

- Student Protection Advisor, and Mental Health Coach positions established in each region
- Development of the Respectful Relationships curriculum and the Mental Health Resource Hub
- Guidance Officers and Senior Guidance Officers trained to enhance skills in suicide prevention and early intervention
- Review of the Learning and Wellbeing Framework, aimed at optimising student mental health and emotional and social wellbeing through a school-wide positive learning culture.

Queensland Family and Child Commission

Julie Harcourt, Project Director, QFCC provided an overview of three key initiatives being implemented:

- [oneplace](#) – community services directory that provides information for children, families, the community and professionals on local support services in Queensland
- [Talking Families](#) – community education campaign that aims to raise awareness of parents to seek support when needed
- [Rumble's Quest](#) – interactive online game developed by Griffith University that measures the wellbeing of children aged five to twelve that is being trialled in Logan schools. Three non-government organisations will trial the game with families.

Department of Justice and Attorney-General, Youth Justice Policy and Programs

Merryn Smith, from DJAG's Youth Justice Policy and Program branch reported a shift in the youth justice system to reflect evidence-based practice. DJAG is assessing global, national and local programs and strategies being implemented to build on Queensland's service provision. Initiatives include:

- trialling individual case management using trauma informed practice

Early action *Queensland Mental Health Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention Action Plan 2015–17*

- introduction of Legislation in Parliament to remove 17 year olds from the adult judicial system
- collaborating with government and non-government agencies to develop a policy framework to keep young people out of the judicial system
- in partnership with DET, transitioning young people into school, vocational education, training and employment.

Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service, Child and Youth Mental Health Service

Judi Krause, Executive Director, CYMHS provided an overview of Adolescent Mental Health Extended Treatment Initiatives that were working well:

- Assertive Mobile Youth Outreach Service – ongoing care and treatment through intensive mobile interventions
- day programs – for young people not requiring inpatient care
- Step Up/Step Down Units – short term residential treatment
- Youth Residential Rehabilitation Units – longer-term accommodation and recovery-oriented treatment
- Subacute Bed-based Unit – medium-term, intensive, inpatient-based treatment and rehabilitation services.

Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

Victoria Van Houdt, Manager of Child Protection Service System Redesign, DCCSDS outlined initiatives to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people:

- connecting with Queensland Police Service, DET and Queensland Health on reforms being implemented
- training of staff to identify and respond to mental health and wellbeing
- investigating death or serious harm of a child through the System Practice Review Committee to improve systemic approaches
- implementing Behaviour Support Policies outlining restraint expectations for children in care.

Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health

Dr Elisabeth Hoehn, Medical Director, QCPIMH highlighted a number of service delivery, promotion and early intervention initiatives that are working well to support the mental health and wellbeing of young children and their parents including:

- Zero to Four CYMHS – specialised mental health service for infant and young children up to four years of age who are not in school
- Zero to Four Family Support Service – volunteer support workers visit families to assist parents
- Strategy and Development Unit –support for health professionals
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perinatal and infant mental health resources for parents and workers
- distributing parenting and mental health resources via parent expos
- SMS4 Dads project supporting co-parenting and parenting infants
- QCPIMH website
www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/qcpimh.

Responding to the mental health and wellbeing needs of children and young people: Non-government agency perspectives

Representatives from non-government agencies were invited to comment on supporting child and youth mental health and wellbeing.

Peakcare

Lindsay Wegener, Executive Director, Peakcare was strongly supportive of involving non-government organisations (NGO's) in reforms. A strengths-based approach that enables conversations between government and non-government organisations was identified as a key way of removing impediments to reform and improving service provision for children, young people and their families.

headspace Aftercare

Amelia Callaghan, Regional Manager, Aftercare spoke about The Poppy Centre, a new initiative for children aged five to eleven years. The service, based in West Moreton, assists in early identification and intervention for children experiencing mental health difficulties and mental illness. The Poppy Centre focuses on children, parents, carers and workforce development to support the child. The

initiative will be evaluated by the University of Southern Queensland.

Responding to the mental health and wellbeing needs of children and young people: A research perspective

Dr Catherine Quinn, Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Centre for Youth Substance Abuse Research, Queensland University of Technology provided a snapshot of current QUT research in mental health and wellbeing and mental illness in children and young people.

Mental disorders affect one in four young Australians, with anxiety, substance abuse and depression experienced most frequently. Seventy-five percent of mental illness emerges before age 25; with only 20 per cent males and 30 per cent females aged 16-24 seeking help.

Whilst research confirms the majority of young Australians experience moderate or good wellbeing, adolescents with mental health disorders have slightly elevated rates of poor mental health. Young people with comorbid disorders have the lowest rates of good mental health.

It was acknowledged that further research is needed to better understand the long-term association between wellbeing and ill health, and the influence of social and peer networks on young people's mental health and wellbeing.

Identifying what we could do better

It was recognised that while there have been welcome developments in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, there is still room to build on these achievements. A number of gaps were identified including:

- difficulty in finding alcohol and other drug and mental health services for young people, particularly in rural, regional and remote communities
- limited service provision and resources for culturally diverse groups including young people from multicultural backgrounds, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and their families
- service provision and resources for children in out-of-home care
- limited resources for perinatal and infant mental health.

Areas identified as needing particular focus were:

- improving the broader view of mental health and wellbeing
- promoting consistent mental health and wellbeing messages in the community
- integrating youth mental health and drug and alcohol services
- re-engaging young people in learning pathways and employment
- promoting evidence-based, multi-disciplinary, inclusive approaches to universal mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, and their families
- promoting greater integration and alignment of mental health and wellbeing in other areas of significant policy reform such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
- educating General Practitioner's in diagnosing mental illness in children and young people and prescription of psychotropic drugs.

Our next steps

The working group welcomed the opportunity to learn more about what is happening across sectors and acknowledged the particular value of dialogue across government, non-government and community sectors at a strategic and policy level.

The Start and Develop Well Working Group will continue to inform the implementation of *Early Action: Queensland Mental Health Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention Action Plan 2015–17*.

The group will also help shape the review of the *Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014–2019* and associated action plans as required by the *Queensland Mental Health Commission Act 2013*. Further advice will be provided on the process for reviewing of the Strategic Plan in the near future.

The next meeting of the Start and Develop Well Working Group will be in early 2017.

Further information

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