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Evaluation of the Kids Plus Therapy Program

Kids+

the
KIDS PLUS FOUNDATION



Kids Plus Foundation

Intensive paediatric therapy programs for babies, children and teenagers with neuro physical disabilities including cerebral palsy, brain injury and stroke

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kids Plus Therapy Program has been in operation since 2004 and is delivered in Geelong, Victoria at no cost to the families attending. Those eligible for the Program include babies, children and teenagers aged 0-18 years old who have physical sensorimotor impairments which limit their ability to participate in functional activities of daily life including mobility, communication, self-care and play.

The target population primarily includes children with cerebral palsy, brain injury or stroke. Priority for intervention is given to babies and younger children and those with multiple impairments needing all therapy disciplines ie. physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech pathology.

The key features of the Program model include:

- Frequent weekly sessions of 1.25 hours duration;
- The consistent/intensive nature of therapy ie. provided in nine week blocks;
- The principles of the Neuro-Developmental Therapy (NDT)–Bobath approach ie. a goal directed, function–focussed approach;
- Encouragement and support of active family involvement including parents, siblings, grandparents and other carers;
- A focus on incremental goals and the re-assessment and review of those goals at the end of each therapy term;¹
- Specialist therapists, and
- Working in partnership with the local disability sector, including disability service providers, referring agencies and paediatricians.

An independent evaluation of the Kids Plus Therapy Program was commissioned by the Kids Plus Foundation and conducted by Debra Barrow of Effective Change Pty Ltd between May 2006 and December 2007.

The purpose of the project was to evaluate the therapy service, process and outcomes as a means of describing, understanding and validating the model for parents, children and the disability sector, and importantly for funding bodies, to facilitate sustainable funding of the Kids Plus Therapy Program. The Program receives no government funding and there is no cost to the families attending.

Through the evaluation, consultations were undertaken with families actively involved with the Kids Plus Therapy Program, disability service providers, paediatricians and other key stakeholders.

¹ Functional goals may include: sitting independently, drinking 100 ml of water from a cup, walking three meters in a crocodile walker

The evidence collected through the consultations and analysis of program data indicates strongly that children and families derive a range of positive outcomes through their involvement with the Kids Plus Therapy Program.

The key findings of the evaluation can be found throughout the body of the report and in summary form in section six. They describe the outcomes of the Kids Plus Therapy Program for children, their families and the disability sector.

One hundred percent of families consulted were able to provide examples of their involvement with the Kids Plus Therapy Program having made a significant impact on both their child's capability and their own skill level and confidence. The data demonstrates that overall, children achieved or partially achieved their stated therapy goals more than 90% of the time. Factors contributing to the achievement of therapy goals were identified as the intensive model of treatment, the skills of the therapists and the subsequent improved skill level and confidence of parents to reinforce therapy goals at home.

Subsequent to their involvement with the Program, families also reported an enhanced knowledge and understanding of their child's abilities, greater understanding of how to best facilitate their progress and developmental needs, greater confidence in negotiating and advocating for services within the disability sector and of being clear in their interactions with other health professionals, particularly medical specialists.

Providing families with a range of service options or choices was seen to have the added benefit within the disability sector of alleviating some of the stressors related to funding constraints and waiting lists.

The disability sector also recognises the benefits to both families and the sector itself, of the availability of another service which complements the government-funded disability sector. Additional services and resources within the sector assist with the management of demand for services. In order to maximise the benefits to families and services however, the disability sector has identified a need for greater understanding between all services and agreed protocols to facilitate effective and streamlined communications across the sector.

The recommendations for the Kids Plus Therapy Program focus on enhancing its current practice through the expansion of its staff base, strengthening interactions and partnerships within the disability sector and improving its systems to more efficiently and effectively capture and describe outcomes.

A further twelve recommendations for the Kids Plus Foundation target its management, future growth and engagement with the disability and government sectors.

The content of this report will be shared with stakeholders of the Kids Plus Foundation, including donors, partners, government, parents, health professionals and disability service providers. The report will be utilised by the Foundation to continue to improve the work of the Kids Plus Therapy Program to help children realise their full potential.