

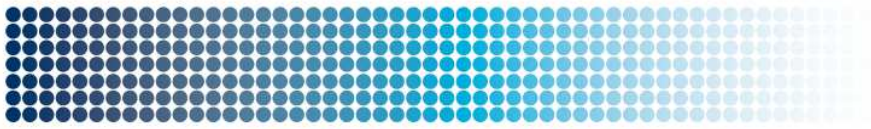
Evaluation of the FamilyCare Mother-Baby Day Stay service

Final report

The Centre for Community Child Health

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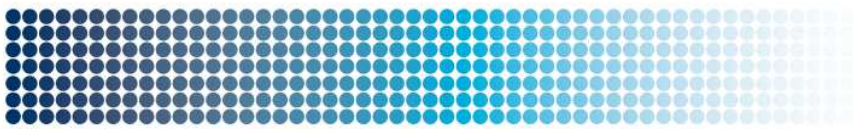
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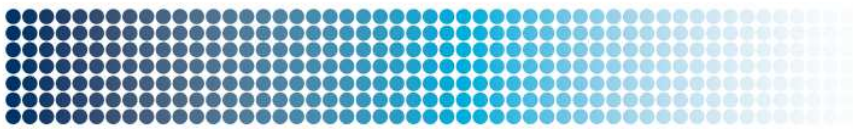
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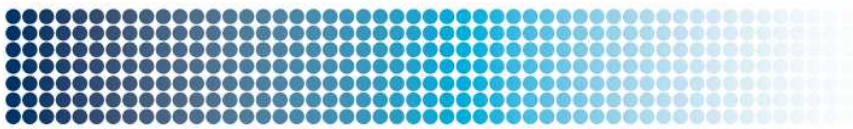
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Glossary

Child	Day Stay targets infants aged 0 to 12 months
KPCS	Karitane Parenting Confidence Scale
MCHN	Maternal and Child Health Nurse
PASDS	Parent Assessment and Skills Development Service
The Centre	Centre for Community Child Health



Executive summary

Background and evaluation overview

The FamilyCare Mother-Baby Day Stay service (Day Stay) was established in November 1995. It offers support to carers of newborn infants (0-12 months), primarily through a one-day education and support session. Families undergo a pre-session assessment by phone prior to attending, and are supported after their Day Stay with follow up phone calls and a variety of associated activities, including referrals to other services and activities in the community.

In 2016, FamilyCare contracted the Centre for Community Child Health (the Centre) at Murdoch Childrens Research Institute to undertake an evaluation of Day Stay. Broadly, the evaluation sought to clarify the Day Stay service model, its evidentiary base and consider whether it has been delivered as intended; as well as investigate program impact and the value of the service as part of the local child and family support system. The evaluation was conceptualised into three core components. Key questions addressed by each evaluation component are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Key evaluation questions presented for each evaluation component

Evaluation component	Key evaluation questions
1. To analyse alignment of the service model to the evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the service model? • How does it align to the evidence and best practice?
2. To evaluate the delivery (process) and impact of Mother-Baby Day Stay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the service model delivered as intended? • Did the initiative have the immediate impact on the recipients that was expected? • Is the initiative making progress towards the longer term outcomes identified?
3. To determine the contribution of Mother-Baby Day Stay to local parent and child supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent is Mother-Baby Day Stay valued as an important local parent and child support?

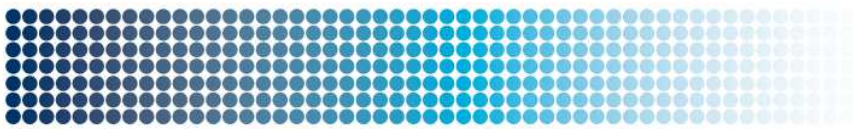
Methodology

To address evaluation component one, the Centre facilitated a program logic workshop with FamilyCare staff to develop an updated Day Stay program logic (see Appendix A). Following the workshop, the program logic was cross-checked against existing research evidence by the project's expert advisor.

To address evaluation components two and three, a range of qualitative and quantitative data was gathered to evaluate the delivery, impact and contribution of Day Stay in the local community. Data sources are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Evaluation data sources

Data source	Sample size	Year of collection
Administrative data	1441 referrals	2011 to 2016
Family interviews	n=8	2016



Family service surveys		2015 and 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-service • Mid-service • Follow up 	<p>n=129</p> <p>n=40</p> <p>n=45</p>	
Family satisfaction survey	n=35	2016
Staff focus group	n=3	2016
Stakeholder interviews	n=4	2016

Findings

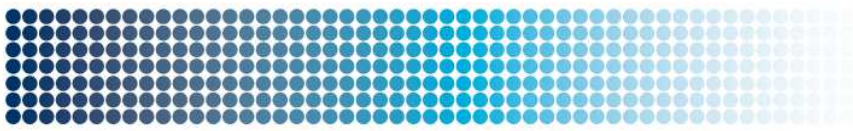
Service model

The primary Day Stay activity is the delivery of one seven and a half our session at the Day Stay facility (house), which involves Day Stay staff providing carer-infant dyads with practical, flexible, individualised support to meet the challenges of caring for a new baby. Families receive a phone call within 24 hours of referral from Child FIRST to Day Stay, in which staff conduct a pre-session assessment and arrange a time for the family to attend. On the day of the session, Day Stay staff use seven core strategies in delivery of Day Stay sessions. Families are also offered material aid to meet immediate needs that arise on the day and are followed up by phone one week following their Day Stay session to monitor their progress.

Beyond their Day Stay session, families are also offered a range of associated Day Stay activities, including phone counselling, home visiting, Circle of Security and playgroup. Behind the scenes, Day Stay staff assist by liaising with other services and professionals working with families (for example, mental health, maternal and child health, general practitioners, Child FIRST, family violence services and the Department of Health and Human Services). Day Stay staff are also involved in training and community education around issues affecting children and families (for example, infant mental health, breastfeeding and sleep settling, also hosting visiting professionals and students).

Alignment of the service model to the evidence

The evaluation found the program is broadly supported by the literature regarding effective early parenting support. The components of the Day Stay service model were examined, including parent-child interaction support and role modelling, practical parenting advice, child development information and the support offered (including referrals) for issues affecting infant/parent wellbeing. Key feedback was that developing relationships with parents is critical to the success of programs like Day Stay, as the practitioner-parent relationship is the medium through which such programs effect change. In particular the warm welcome and orientation, and parent/infant focused approach of the program were considered important elements of Day Stay, highlighting the central role of relationships to the Day Stay service model. Notwithstanding, further work is required to explicitly articulate and document how each of the Day Stay activities listed in the program logic are carried out. This would enable a more detailed review of how specific techniques used within the Day Stay activities align with the evidence and best practice, and support sustainability of the service. It would also contribute to the effectiveness of the program by ensuring that staff have a greater common understanding of key principles and practices underpinning the program.



Delivery of Day Stay

Data showed that Day Stay is generally being delivered as intended. It is clear that staff are warm and welcoming to families and offer them substantial support, information and practical help on a wide range of relevant topics. The evaluation revealed that there is some scope to make the session planning process more explicit in order to ensure this is undertaken in partnership with families, and addresses the issues that are most salient or of most interest to parents. It would also be beneficial for Day Stay staff to record when and what material aid items are given to families, referrals to other services and the number of training and education sessions delivered, to provide evidence of program outputs and ensure these aspects of the service are monitored. It is of note that the frequency at which associated activities have been delivered to families has generally declined over the period 2011/12 to 2015/16.

The impact of Day Stay

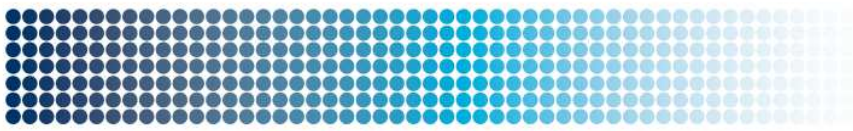
There has been substantial progress made towards achieving Day Stay's intended outcomes. There is strong evidence that all immediate (short term) outcomes are being achieved, with further evidence of progress towards the longer term outcomes articulated in the program logic. In particular, there is very strong evidence that Day Stay has improved parenting confidence and created significant positive changes for parents, children and their family units.

The contribution of Day Stay to the local community

Feedback from families and stakeholders, supported by comments made by staff, indicated that Day Stay is held in very high regard in the local community. Feedback indicated that the service is widely appreciated and is currently addressing a clear community need. It is highly valued for its extensive and practical content addressing families' early parenting needs; its high quality; its accessibility; and the active role Day Stay staff play in driving and supporting change to improve the broader service system supporting young children and their families in the region.

Considerations for future

The evaluation process uncovered many very positive findings in relation to the delivery of Day Stay, its progress towards outcomes and value to the community. It is clear that on the whole, families, stakeholders and staff view the program as functioning well, and consider that it is an essential early parenting support to many children and families in the community. The evaluation has also identified considerations for ongoing program improvement, which if implemented, would serve to further enhance and strengthen Day Stay. It has identified that the service would benefit from clearer articulation and documentation of the detail of how the service is delivered; implementing a more explicit session planning process; strengthening feedback provided to referrers into the service; and further refining ongoing program monitoring and improvement processes. Action in the areas identified for improvement will serve to strengthen this highly respected and valued service, ensuring Day Stay continues to provide a best practice response to the needs of families and young children in the local community.



1. Introduction

1.1 Program background

The FamilyCare Mother-Baby Day Stay service (Day Stay) was established in November 1995. The service was initiated as part of the organisation’s broader Parent Child Program, which aims to assist local children and families with a variety of childhood, parenting and family challenges, through the provision of practical advice and support. Day Stay has been running for 21 years and currently operates for a total of five days per fortnight – three days in Shepparton and one day per fortnight on rotation in Cobram and Seymour.

Day Stay provides support to carers of newborn infants in their first year of life. Its primary activity is a one-day intervention which involves providing families with practical, flexible, individualised support and education in a seven and a half hour session. Families undergo a pre-session assessment by phone prior to attending, and are supported after their Day Stay with follow up phone calls and a variety of associated activities, including referrals to other services and activities in the community.

There are many issues faced by local families that the Day Stay service seeks to address. These range from practical parenting issues (such as feeding and sleeping), to more complex issues affecting wellbeing. The program’s target group includes socially isolated families, culturally and linguistically diverse families, Aboriginal families, young parents, as well as families experiencing intellectual disability, mental health issues and family violence.

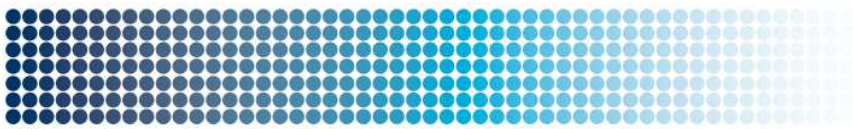
1.2 Evaluation overview

Anecdotally, feedback over many years has suggested that Day Stay is appreciated in the local community and is viewed as an effective support for the children and families it serves. However, the service has not previously been formally evaluated. In 2016, FamilyCare contracted the Centre for Community Child Health (the Centre) to undertake an evaluation of Day Stay. Broadly, the evaluation sought to clarify the Day Stay service model, its evidentiary base and consider whether it has been delivered as intended; as well as investigate program impact and the value of the service as part of the local child and family support system.

The evaluation was conceptualised into three core components. Key questions addressed by each evaluation component are summarised in [Table 3](#).

Table 3. Key evaluation questions presented for each evaluation component

Evaluation component	Key evaluation questions
1. To analyse alignment of the service model to the evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the service model? • How does it align to the evidence and best practice?
2. To evaluate the delivery (process) and impact of Mother-Baby Day Stay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the service model delivered as intended? • Did the initiative have the immediate impact on the recipients that was expected? • Is the initiative making progress towards the longer term outcomes identified?



3. To determine the contribution of Mother-Baby Day Stay to local parent and child supports

- To what extent is Mother-Baby Day Stay valued as an important local parent and child support?

The next section of this report presents an overview of the methodology adopted for the evaluation and findings are presented in the following section. Emerging themes are then discussed, alongside considerations for the ongoing implementation of Day Stay into the future.

2. Methodology

2.1 Approach and rationale

This evaluation was underpinned by a participatory and outcomes-based approach. The development of an evaluation framework and updating the program logic were foundational tasks undertaken at the beginning of the project to guide the evaluation.

Participatory evaluations involve stakeholders in evaluation activity, with the aim of building participants' evaluation capacity (Haviland, 2004). In the context of the Day Stay evaluation, a participatory approach was adopted to enable FamilyCare staff to shape and inform the evaluation framework, enhancing skills and capacity for future monitoring and evaluation of Day Stay. This also ensured a meaningful, appropriate and feasible evaluation design was developed.

Outcomes-based approaches 'start with the end in mind', asking 'what change do we want?' and working backwards to define the strategies that are used to bring about that change. Process, impact and outcomes are key elements of an outcomes-based approach to evaluation, enabling investigation of how planned activities are delivered and what progress has been made in relation to agreed outcomes. An outcomes-based approach was a natural fit for the Day Stay evaluation given the key questions the evaluation sought to address.

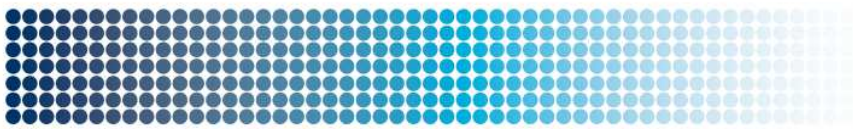
2.2 Evaluation component one: Alignment of the service model to the evidence

2.2.1 Program logic development

Re-visiting a program's outcomes and clarifying a program's logic are important first steps in an outcomes-based evaluation. A program logic is intended to diagrammatically depict key components of a program and how these components lead to the intended outcomes. When undertaken in a participatory manner, this process ensures there is a shared understanding of the program to be evaluated and clarifies where evaluation focus and efforts are required.

The Centre facilitated a program logic workshop with FamilyCare staff to develop an updated Day Stay program logic (see Appendix A) in March 2016. The workshop was an exercise in the group refining the existing Day Stay program logic by clarifying service context, inputs, activities and outputs, as well as the intended short, medium and long term outcomes.

Once updated, the program logic was verified against the research evidence by the project's expert advisor. Outcomes of this verification were discussed with Day Stay staff via teleconference.



2.2.2 Evaluation framework development

An evaluation framework (see Appendix B) was developed, on the basis of the updated Day Stay program logic, to guide activities in components two and three of the evaluation. The framework detailed a series of 19 process indicators and nine impact indicators and set out relevant data sources, responsibilities for data collection and timelines.

2.3 Evaluation components two and three: process, impact and value

A range of qualitative and quantitative data was collected to address evaluation components two and three: to assess the process and impact of Day Stay, and determine the contribution of Day Stay to local parent and child supports. Data sources included administrative program data and worker notes; parent surveys and interviews; a staff focus group and stakeholder interviews. Numbers of participants involved are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4. Numbers of participants involved in data collection for evaluation components two and three

Data source	Sample size	Year of collection
Administrative data	1441 referrals	2011 to 2016
Family interviews	n=8	2016
Family service surveys		2015 and 2016
• Pre-service	n=129	
• Mid-service	n=40	
• Follow up	n=45	
Family satisfaction survey	n=35	2016
Staff focus group	n=3	2016
Stakeholder interviews	n=4	2016

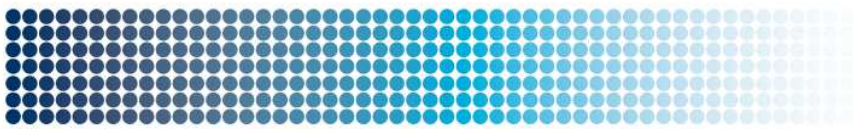
An overview of each source is provided below.

2.3.1 Administrative data

FamilyCare provided non-identifiable administrative program data for the period from July 2011 to June 2016 (five full financial years), based on electronic records and staff notes. Database output was provided in relation to 1441 referrals into the program across the five year period, and further records were provided in relation to discrete aspects of the process evaluation (i.e. number of visiting professionals, number of community education and training events delivered).

2.3.2 Family interviews and surveys

Family data analysed in this report included interview and survey data. Eight mothers participated in semi-structured parent interviews. Three interviews were held in-person at the Day Stay house in Shepparton in May 2016 and the five remaining interviews were conducted over the phone in June 2016. Seven of the eight mothers had attended Day Stay in the previous six months. The remaining mother attended in September 2014. Six mothers attended Day Stay in Shepparton, one attended in Cobram and the remaining mother attended in Seymour. Three mothers had attended one Day Stay session, however most mothers (n=5) reported attending Day Stay on two or more occasions. Mothers were asked a series of questions relating to their experience of Day Stay, designed to address process and impact indicators, as well as their perspective on the value of the Day Stay program in their local area (questions attached as Appendix C).



Family survey data was collected by FamilyCare as part of ongoing program monitoring and review. Data was available from two different survey processes: the family satisfaction survey and the service surveys (pre, mid and post service).

The family satisfaction survey (see Appendix D) contained nine items relating to families' experiences of Day Stay. There were 35 respondents to the survey from January to June 2016, all female, ranging in age from 16 to 55.

The service surveys are administered by Day Stay staff at the beginning of the Day Stay session (pre) and on follow up at the point of service closure (follow up) as part of normal program operations. Day Stay staff were asked to collect the survey at an additional time point (end of the Day Stay session) for one month during the evaluation. This additional time point is referred to as the 'mid-service' survey in this report. Each service survey contains the Karitane Parenting Confidence Scale (KPCS) (Črnčec, Barnett, & Matthey, 2008) for comparison of parenting confidence scores over time. The KPCS is a 15-item questionnaire designed to measure perceived parenting self-efficacy in parents of children 0-12 months. Each item is scored 0 to 3, with the sum of scores on all items producing a total score. The KPCS cut-off score is 39, indicating that parents with a total score of 39 or below may be experiencing low levels of parenting confidence. There was pre-service KPCS data for 129 families, mid-service data for 40 families and follow up service data for 45. The pre and post service surveys also contained additional items. In the pre-service survey, these related to reasons for attending and in the post service survey, these related to feelings about Day Stay. The service surveys are attached as Appendix E.

2.3.3 Staff focus group

Three Day Stay staff participated in a semi-structured staff focus group at FamilyCare in Shepparton in May 2016. Questions asked of staff are attached as Appendix F. Staff who participated in the focus group were trained in early childhood education, nursing and midwifery and perinatal and infant mental health. All three staff had been at FamilyCare for a minimum of six years at the time of the focus group, with the longest serving staff member coming up to 13 years of service. All three staff had extensive experience working with young children and their families in the local area, prior to joining FamilyCare.

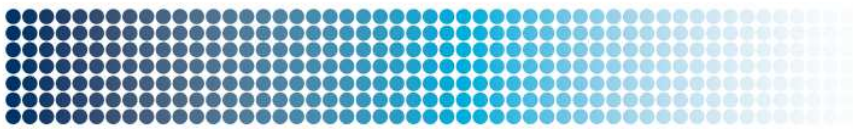
2.3.4 Stakeholder interviews

FamilyCare staff identified four stakeholders involved with Day Stay as service partners and/or as part of the Day Stay referral network, to participate in telephone interviews in June 2016. These stakeholders were drawn from the Maternal and Child Health Nurse teams at Greater Shepparton City Council, Moira Shire and Strathbogie shire; and the local Best Start partnership. Questions asked of stakeholders are attached as Appendix G.

2.4 Limitations

While the methodology adopted for this evaluation had several strengths, including access to over five years of administrative program data and triangulation of data from multiple sources, using mixed methods, it important to note some limitations.

First, eight mothers and four stakeholders were consulted in qualitative interviews over the course of the evaluation. While their responses were very valuable and shed considerable light on family and



stakeholder perspectives on the program, this sample cannot be taken to be representative of all mothers or all professionals involved with Day Stay.

Second, there is a risk that there may have been a positive bias in family interview responses due to the inherent difficulty in recruiting families with negative views. It is possible that mothers who were: (1) able to be contacted and (2) who agreed to participate in an interview, may have been more likely to view the program positively, compared to those who may have been unsatisfied and/or were not contactable to participate in the review.

Third, there was likely overlap in the samples of families interviewed and surveyed. There was also likely overlap in the individuals who completed the two different surveys, but matching and mapping was not undertaken to determine the extent of this. Where interview and survey data are presented it should be noted that these are not independent samples, as families who participated in interviews were likely to have also completed surveys.

Finally, limitations must also be noted in relation to the administrative data provided. The database referral information contained some missing and inaccurate data, so does not provide a full, complete picture of all referrals into the program. For instance in some cases, case outcomes or closure reasons recorded did not match defined data entry categories and so these referrals were excluded from the analysis. However, given the large number of referrals and relatively few observed instances of missing or inaccurate data, this is not overly problematic. Inferences drawn rely on the accuracy of the data in the database.

3. Findings

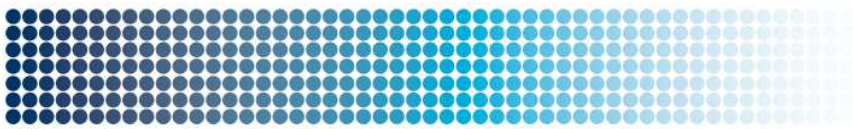
3.1 What is the Day Stay service model?

The updated Day Stay program logic (Appendix A) details important components of the Day Stay service model, including program inputs, activities, outputs and associated short, medium and long term outcomes.

The primary Day Stay activity is the delivery of one seven and a half hour session at the Day Stay facility (house), which involves Day Stay staff providing carer-infant dyads with practical, flexible, individualised support. Up to four families attend the same Day Stay venue at once, with two Day Stay staff working at each session. Families receive a phone call within 24 hours of referral from Child FIRST to Day Stay, in which staff conduct a pre-session assessment and arrange a time for the family to attend. Families are triaged according to presenting needs and this determines prioritisation of scheduling families into sessions.

On the day of the session, Day Stay staff use seven core strategies in delivery of Day Stay sessions, including:

- Providing families with a warm welcome and orientation to the session
- Developing an infant/parent focused care plan in partnership with the parent (addressing issues most salient to the parent) and ensure an infant/parent focused approach to the session
- Observing, eliciting and supporting parent-child interaction
- Role modelling positive parent-child interaction
- Providing practical parenting advice (feeding, settling, behaviour management, hygiene, injury prevention)



- Providing up to date information about child development (ages and stages, importance of play/stimulation)
- Offering support, information or referrals for issues affecting infant/parent wellbeing.

Families are also offered material aid to meet immediate needs that arise on the day (for example clothing, food hampers, bottles) and are followed up by phone after their Day Stay session to monitor their progress.

Beyond their Day Stay session, families are also offered a range of associated Day Stay services, including phone counselling, home visiting, Circle of Security and playgroup. Behind the scenes, Day Stay staff assist by liaising with other services and professionals working with families (for example, mental health, maternal and child health, general practitioners, Child FIRST, family violence services and the Department of Health and Human Services). Day Stay staff are also involved in training and community education around issues affecting children and families (for example, infant mental health, breastfeeding and sleep settling, also hosting visiting professionals and students).

3.2 How does the Day Stay service model align to the evidence and best practice?

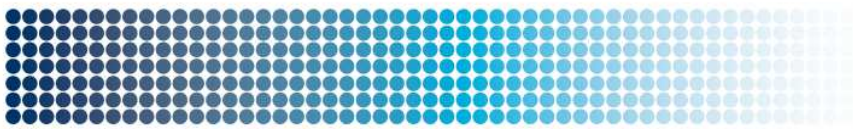
The project’s expert advisor reviewed the Day Stay program logic to consider how the model aligns to the evidence and best practice. This review found that the model was broadly supported by the literature regarding effective early parenting support. Components of the Day Stay service model were examined, including parent-child interaction support and role modelling, practical parenting advice, child development information and the support offered (including referrals) for issues affecting infant/parent wellbeing.

Key feedback was that developing relationships with parents is critical to the success of programs like Day Stay, as the practitioner-parent relationship is the medium through which such programs effect change. It is vital for Day Stay staff to tune into parents to ensure that the service addresses their goals and aligns with their values, and to purposefully build relationships with parents. To this end, the pre-session assessment, warm welcome and orientation, and parent/infant focused approach of the program are particularly important elements of Day Stay. Evidence suggests that taking a partnership approach with parents (Davis & Day, 2010) and making sure parents feel heard and understood are critical in order for parenting support programs to be effective. The flexibility of the Day Stay model and its ability to cater for an individual family’s needs was also identified as beneficial.

The project’s expert advisor offered several resources to support staff’s delivery of parent-child interaction support, practical parenting advice, child development information and support and information in relation to issues affecting infant/parent wellbeing. Suggested resources are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5. Resources suggested to Day Stay staff to support program activities.

Day Stay activity	Resource
Observe, elicit and support parent-child interaction	See review of responsive parenting interventions in Moore, T.G., McDonald, M. and Sanjeevan, S. (2013). <i>Evidence-based service modules for a sustained home visiting program: A literature review</i> . Prepared for the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth. Parkville, Victoria: The Centre for Community Child Health at



	<p>Murdoch Childrens Research Institute and The Royal Children’s Hospital.</p> <p>See also: Lori A. Roggman, Lisa K. Boyce and Mark S. Innocenti (2008). <i>Developmental Parenting: A Guide for Early Childhood Practitioners</i>. Baltimore, Maryland: Paul H. Brookes.</p>
Role model positive parent-child interaction	See: Roggman, Boyce & Innocenti (2008)
Provide practical parenting advice (feeding, settling, behaviour management, hygiene, injury prevention)	Strategies for addressing specific areas of concern around such issues were reviewed for the right@home project, see Moore, McDonald & Sanjeevan (2013)
Provide information about child development (ages and stages, importance of play/stimulation)	Victorian Maternal and Child Health materials and framework
Offer support, information or referrals for issues affecting infant/parent wellbeing	The Centre’s Parent Engagement Resource (PER) provides a systematic and family-centred way of identifying issues relating to parental wellbeing and family functioning

The expert considered that further work should be undertaken at Day Stay to explicitly articulate and document how each of the activities listed in the program logic is carried out. This would enable a more detailed review of how specific techniques used within Day Stay activities align with the evidence and best practice. Undertaking this process would also have benefits for the portability and replicability of the program. It is important that staff are familiar with the relevant literature and particular approaches underlying the program (e.g. family centred, developmental parenting). Documenting these would contribute to the effectiveness of the program by ensuring that staff have a shared understanding of key principles and practices. It would also be of benefit to support the sustainability of the program, for instance in the orientation of new future staff.

3.3 Has Day Stay been delivered as intended?

To examine whether Day Stay has been delivered as intended, data was analysed against the process indicators outlined in the evaluation framework. Analysis showed that Day Stay is generally being delivered as intended. It is clear that staff are warm and welcoming to families and offer them substantial support, information and practical help on a wide range of relevant topics. The evaluation revealed that there is some scope to make the session planning process more explicit in order to ensure this is undertaken in partnership with families, and addresses the issues that are most salient or of most interest to parents. It would also be beneficial for Day Stay staff to record when and what material aid items are given to families, referrals to other services and the number of training and education sessions delivered, to provide evidence of program outputs and ensure these aspects of the service are monitored. It is of note that the frequency at which associated activities have been delivered to families has generally declined over the period 2011/12 to 2015/16.

Summary findings in relation to the process indicators are presented in Table 6. Findings are then fully elaborated by service activity in the sections that follow.

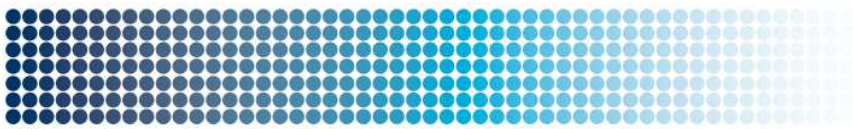


Table 6. Summary findings in relation to process indicators

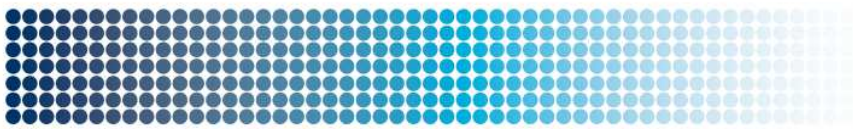
Summary process findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 93 per cent of families referred to Day Stay participated in a pre-session assessment in the five-year period from 2011/12 to 2015/16.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 838 families attended Day Stay in the five-year period.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Five of eight mothers interviewed specifically recalled staff being friendly and welcoming when they first arrived, however all families commented positively on the interactions they had with staff at Day Stay during the session and on follow up.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff described planning Day Stay sessions by asking families questions about their concerns and observing their interactions with their children. Families interviewed did not consider they had participated in 'planning' for their Day Stay with staff.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Six of the eight mothers interviewed reported feeling their Day Stay session was designed around their family's needs. 94 per cent of respondents to the satisfaction survey agreed that staff listened to them. In interviews, all families indicated they appreciated staff observing, eliciting and supporting parent-child interaction.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff indicated it was common practice for them to role model positive parenting behaviour during Day Stay sessions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All families interviewed indicated that Day Stay staff provided them with practical parenting help by role modelling and demonstrating new techniques. All 45 respondents to the follow up parent survey agreed that Day Stay staff were knowledgeable about parenting and babies. Five of the eight mothers interviewed reported Day Stay staff had provided them with support in relation to broader issues.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FamilyCare receives donations of baby clothes, toys and other items which staff distribute as required. No data on number and type of items distributed is currently recorded. Transport assistance can be provided if families cannot get to Day Stay.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff reported that all families receive follow up phone calls one week after Day Stay. Families commented that their experience of Day Stay follow up was exceptional. Analysis of administrative data revealed that between two to seven per cent of families had participated in different associated activities over five years.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day Stay hosted a total of 82 visiting professionals and students over five years. No data on number of training and education sessions delivered is currently recorded.

3.3.1 Pre-session assessment

In the period from July 2011 to June 2016, 1059 families were referred to Day Stay. Some 841 families were referred to Day Stay on a single occasion, while the remaining 218 families were referred to Day Stay multiple times over the five-year period (median of two referrals, with a maximum of 11 referrals for one family over the five years). In total, Day Stay received 1441 referrals from 2011/12 to 2015/16, as summarised in Table 7.

Table 7. Referrals to Day Stay by region in the period 2011/12 to 2015/16.

Region	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Total
Benalla	1	1	-	-	1	3
Campaspe	-	1	3	4	18	26
Greater Shepparton	154	138	150	143	176	761
Loddon	-	-	-	-	1	1



Mitchell	64	66	29	22	55	236
Moira	87	67	51	42	69	316
Murrundindi	10	2	2	8	3	25
New South Wales	3	5	-	1	5	14
Queensland	-	-	-	-	1	1
Strathbogie	11	10	9	14	13	57
Whittlesea	-	1	-	-	-	1
Total	330	291	244	234	342	1441

Day Stay referral data captured service closure reasons for 1372 (95 per cent) of the total 1441 referrals into the program. Of those 1372 referrals with a recorded closure reason, only 95 (7 per cent) were closed without Day Stay staff having made initial contact with the family to undertake a pre-session assessment and coordinate an appointment time. It can therefore be inferred that 1277 referrals to Day Stay (93 per cent) progressed to a pre-session assessment. Numbers of referrals closed without a pre-session assessment from 2011/12 to 2015/16 are summarised in Table 8.

Table 8. Number and percentage of Day Stay referrals closed without a pre-session assessment having taken place from 2011/12 to 2015/16.

Financial year	Number	Percentage
2011/12	15	5%
2012/13	16	6%
2013/14	16	7%
2014/15	21	9%
2015/16	27	9%
Total	95	7%

Day Stay Case Statistics reports provided an indication of the response time (in calendar days) families waited between referral to Day Stay and their first phone call from Day Stay staff in the same period. Across the five year period, most families received a phone call on the same day as the referral was received by Day Stay staff, as summarised in Figure 1.

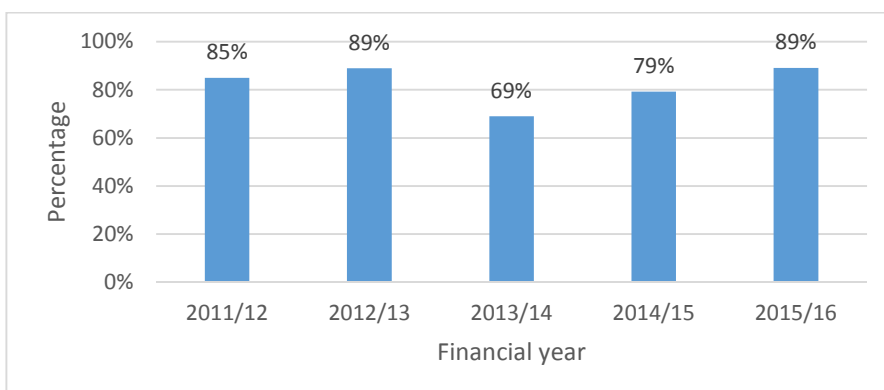
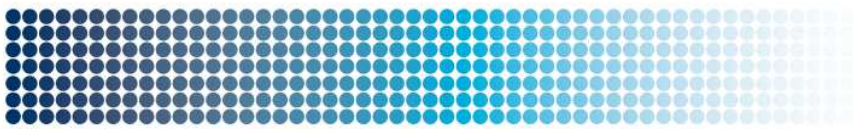


Figure 1. Proportions of families who received an initial pre-session assessment phone call on the same day their referral was received by Day Stay in the period 2011/12 to 2015/16.



3.3.2 Day Stay session activities

Number of families attending Day Stay

A total of 1089 individual Day Stay sessions were delivered to families over the period 2011/12 to 2015/16.¹ Analysis revealed that a total of 838 different families attended these sessions (79 per cent of the total 1059 families referred to Day Stay). Number of Day Stays delivered and families participating in Day Stay over the period 2011/12 to 2015/16 are summarised in Figure 2.

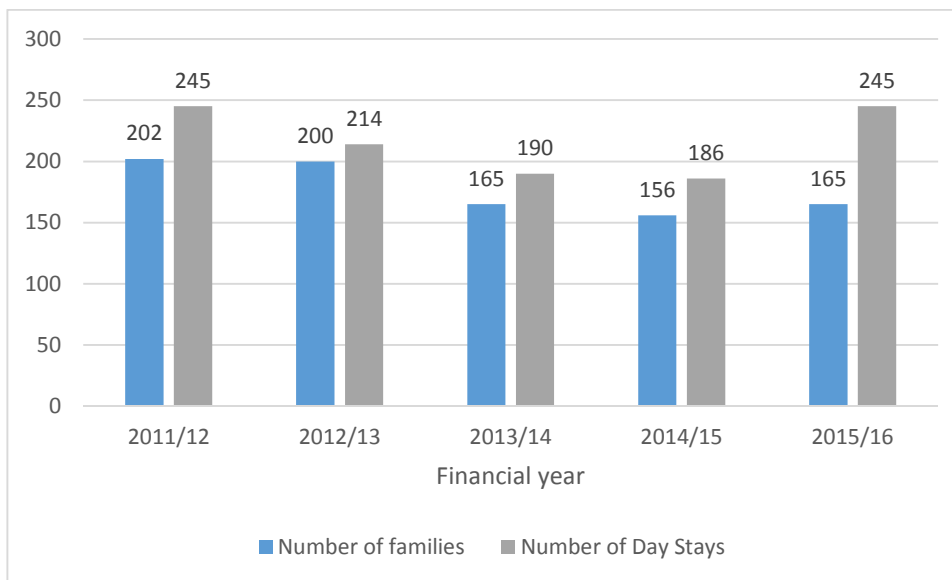


Figure 2. Number of individual Day Stay sessions delivered to families over the period 2011/12 to 2015/16.

Note: higher number of Day Stays delivered per year than number of families per year in Figure 2 is indicative of multiple attendances at Day Stay by some families.

A sub-set of 57 families referred to Day Stay during the period 2011/12 to 2015/16 were referred as part of the Parent Assessment and Skills Development Service (PASDS).² Analysis revealed that 48 of the 57 families (84 per cent) attended Day Stay in the relevant period.³ A breakdown of the number of PASDS families attending Day Stay each year is provided in Figure 3. Note: one family attended in two years and so have been included in Figure 3 for both of those years.

¹ To determine how many of the total 1441 referrals to Day Stay translated into attendance at Day Stay, referral data was filtered by closure reason and case outcome. Due to some missing data and data entry errors, outcome data was available for 1371 referrals and as reported above, exit closure reasons were available for 1372 referrals. Referrals with missing or erroneous data (codes outside set closure and outcome categories) were removed, along with those where the recorded outcome was 'not applicable' (closed at assessment or prior to) and those where the family did not engage with the service. The resulting filtering identified a total of 1089 referrals, indicating that at least 1089 sessions had taken place

² FamilyCare is one of nine agencies delivering PASDS in Victoria. The Victorian Department of Health and Human Services website describes PASDS as a targeted service provided to children who are notified to child protection from birth to two years of age. PASDS includes an assessment of children's overall wellbeing and the parent's capacity to care for and protect the child. These assessments are then used by child protection and the Children's Court to inform decision making and ensure appropriate supports are provided to vulnerable children and their families. These services also include an intensive education and skill development component for parents.

³ Using the same filtering process as described in footnote 1.

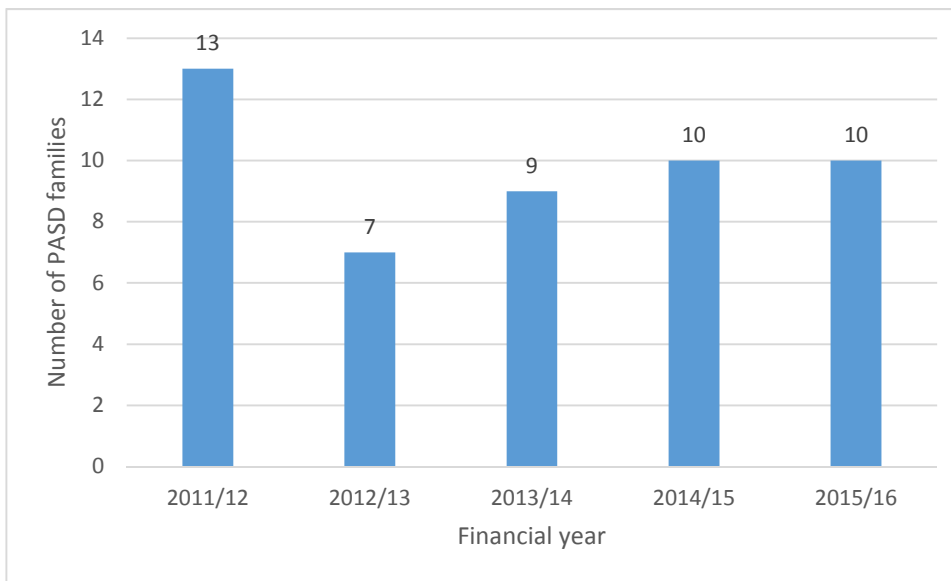
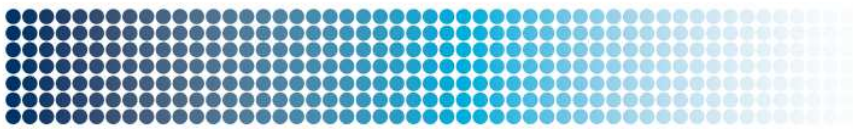


Figure 3. Number of PASDS families attending Day Stay in the period 2011/12 to 2015/16.

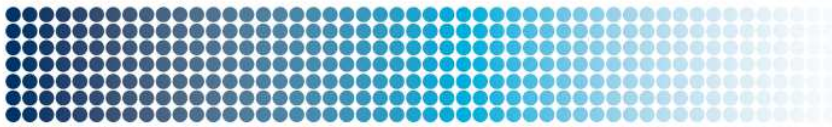
Warm welcome and orientation

A key focus of Day Stay is ensuring families feel welcome when they first arrive. Both Day Care staff and families reflected on how this took place.

In the staff focus group, Day Stay workers described actively trying to make families feel welcome at the beginning of sessions by introducing themselves and others, orientating families to where things are at the Day Stay house (toilets, where to put bottles, etc) and talking to them about the day. Staff considered it important that families feel at home for the day from the very beginning, but also emphasised that it was important to be responsive to each family as they walk through the door:

“We had a client the other week and she was extremely anxious, and the baby was due to sleep, so the baby went into her room... and she was up the front [of the house] for her to have a rest because she was just exhausted, and we thought ‘hey, this mum is really struggling’. I went down and spoke to her and talked about how difficult it can be when you come here and your baby needs to be put to sleep straight away and you haven’t got used to us, and trust us when you don’t know us. She really warmed to that idea, and she said ‘yes, look this is what I’m struggling with’, and we were able to talk with her and we got a good outcome on the day. But it could have gone the opposite way – it was the teamwork of [one worker saying] ‘I’m here settling the baby, can you go and sort mum out?’, otherwise that mum could have walked back out.” (Day Stay staff member)

Staff reported that mothers often feel anxious when they arrive at Day Stay, but that by lunchtime, most feel comfortable to leave their babies with Day Stay staff while they go out and get some lunch. They commented that it was a major step for many mothers to separate from their babies and, that doing so, demonstrated the level of trust staff and families develop during Day Stay sessions. One worker described a difficult situation where a mother was very confrontational on arrival and how she managed to diffuse the situation:



"I had a mum one day when I was here on my own come in with her back up against the wall and she basically dressed me down as soon as we met and that was a really difficult situation. So I basically sat her down to calm her down, made her a cup of tea, she was in tears, very apologetic that I just happened to be the scapegoat of the day. It's just a matter of working through whatever you get, but by the end of the day she was fine." (Day Stay staff member)

Staff commented that it could be particularly challenging for families referred to Day Stay from Child Protection. They noted that these families can be quite suspicious and defensive, and described how explaining to them that Day Stay is there to help sort out what interventions and supports they need, those families tended to relax. Staff added that some of the families who had been mandated to attend Day Stay through Child Protection in the past had asked to come back for subsequent sessions, voluntarily, to learn more about how to parent their children:

"We've got two at the moment, one of them said they've never had their children for this long, they don't know what to do, they want to come back in. And initially they were made to come, so I think that is a positive." (Day Stay staff member)

When families were asked to comment on their experience with the Day Stay staff in interviews, five of the eight mothers specifically recalled the staff being friendly and welcoming when they first arrived at Day Stay. All mothers commented positively on the interactions they had with staff during the session. They reported that the Day Stay staff made them feel comfortable and supported, and many mentioned that they appreciated the calm, non-judgmental environment that staff created during their session(s):

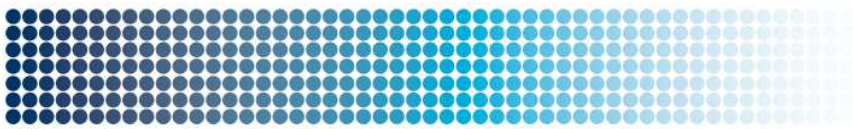
"They made me feel really comfortable, which is important because it can be a bit daunting. Sometimes I get judged being a younger mum but I didn't feel judged for being a younger mum. They asked me things and didn't judge me for it, they suggested other ways I could do it. They were very welcoming." (Day Stay mother)

Two mothers mentioned that they had been nervous about attending a program like Day Stay, but commented that they soon felt at ease once they arrived at the session:

"When you first walk through the door of something like this, you feel kind of like oh, God, everyone's going to think I'm a failure, having to come to things like this. But you soon realise that the environment's not like that. The Mums are here for the same reason and the staff have had their own kids and they've been through it themselves. It's comfortable." (Day Stay mother)

"When I first arrived, I have to admit that I felt really anxious, a bit uptight because I didn't know what I was walking into. I thought I'd get grief if I was doing something wrong. After I walked in and they spoke to me, I have to admit that I actually felt better. ... The first time I went, I was stressed, all the other times I've been fine, because I know. ... I was just thinking that two weeks ago, I was so excited because I was going to go [to Day Stay] to learn something new." (Day Stay mother)

In the satisfaction survey, families were asked to rate how often they felt staff listened to them during their involvement with Day Stay. Of 35 respondents, 29 (83 per cent) responded 'always', four (11 per cent) responded 'most of the time' and two responded 'sometimes.' While most families provided positive comments about their experience with the workers, mirroring feedback of families in interviews, one respondent raised a negative experience with the service:



“To be honest, I felt I was not listened to when it came to my needs or just was not understood. I also felt judged and felt the worker always ‘forgot’ what we talked about the prior visit.” (Day Stay mother)

Of the 45 respondents to the family follow up service survey, 44 (98 per cent) agreed that they felt they could talk to Day Stay staff about their concerns. The remaining family responded ‘neutral’ to this question.

Overall, family feedback indicated that staff strategies have been effective in making families feel welcome at Day Stay, to normalise their experience of accessing an early parenting service and to help them to feel comfortable in the service environment.

Session planning and adopting an infant/parent focused approach

Staff and families were asked to reflect on how Day Stay session planning has occurred and to what extent Day Stay is delivered using an infant/parent focused approach.

Staff described Day Stay sessions in terms of a combination of standard activities undertaken with each family and flexible incidental teaching in relation to things that come up on the day. They indicated that Day Stay always involves covering feeding, sleeping and identifying tired signs, but that any other issues that emerge can be addressed through individualising the session. They indicated that they plan for the session by asking each family what has brought them to Day Stay, what their issues, needs and most pressing problems are. Staff reported that in general the morning involves role modelling and in the afternoon families implement the new techniques demonstrated with support from Day Stay staff. However, they noted that this is flexible as older children (e.g. eight months) and very young babies may not respond to the workers so the support for each family is customised to suit these needs.

Staff described the need to pay close attention to the families to respond to their needs – both needs that families articulate and those that staff uncover through observations and interactions on the day:

“Once they start to settle in you’ll start to work things out, like depression, family violence.” (Day Stay staff member)

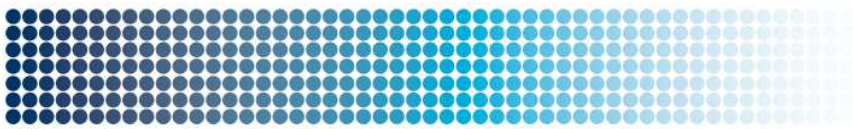
“[One Mum] didn’t identify that [her child] didn’t eat solids very well, so we did a lot of role modelling on how to do that in a positive way.” (Day Stay staff member)

“It’s very diverse, very flexible, we are thinking all the time – that’s why you are so exhausted. No two families are ever the same. And you’re watching the mums the whole time.” (Day Stay staff member)

Staff talked about how imperative teamwork was in their planning and support provided to families:

“If [one staff member] is struggling with something you’ll say ‘I’ve done this and this, do you want to look at this for me, what do you reckon’, so we often bounce ideas around.” (Day Stay staff member)

Staff reflected that they worked well together as a team to determine and meet families’ needs. They considered that this benefited families because it meant that all staff were on the same page and could offer backup support throughout the day. They spoke of how their work has evolved over time, and that



they don't necessarily get together and decide on the most effective ways of doing things in terms of formal planning, they prefer to work together to adapt their practice for the needs of each family. Staff provided a particular example of how this adaptive practice works in the team:

"I used my attachment theory stuff because this mum hasn't separated from her baby at all, so the first thing I've got to do is get the baby to lay in the cot beside mum for the day, that was our goal. We have done it with two mums now. This was the first time, and I said to [the other Day Stay worker], 'how am I going to get this cot out of here?' And we wheeled it out into the common area, and sat mum down. Six to eight weeks later, we got baby sleeping and mum managing. Well, the other day I had this baby's cousin turn up and he is 8 months old and he has never slept in his cot. So I put him in the other room and as soon as I started to look, he started to cry and I looked at mum and I said right. [The other worker] saw me with the cot, and she knew exactly what I was doing and she said 'you've got another one', I didn't have to say 'this is what I need you to do', she knew what the problem was." (Day Stay staff member)

In addition to conversations at the pre-assessment and initial welcome, families are asked to complete the Day Stay pre-service questionnaire when they first arrive for their Day Stay session. The first question asks families to provide an indication of their main reasons for attending the service. The survey presents a list of eight early parenting topics, including 'other' where families can specify additional issues. Answers to the pre-service survey is another means by which staff are guided by families in terms of what to cover during Day Stay sessions. Pre-service survey responses to this question (n=129) are summarised in Figure 4.

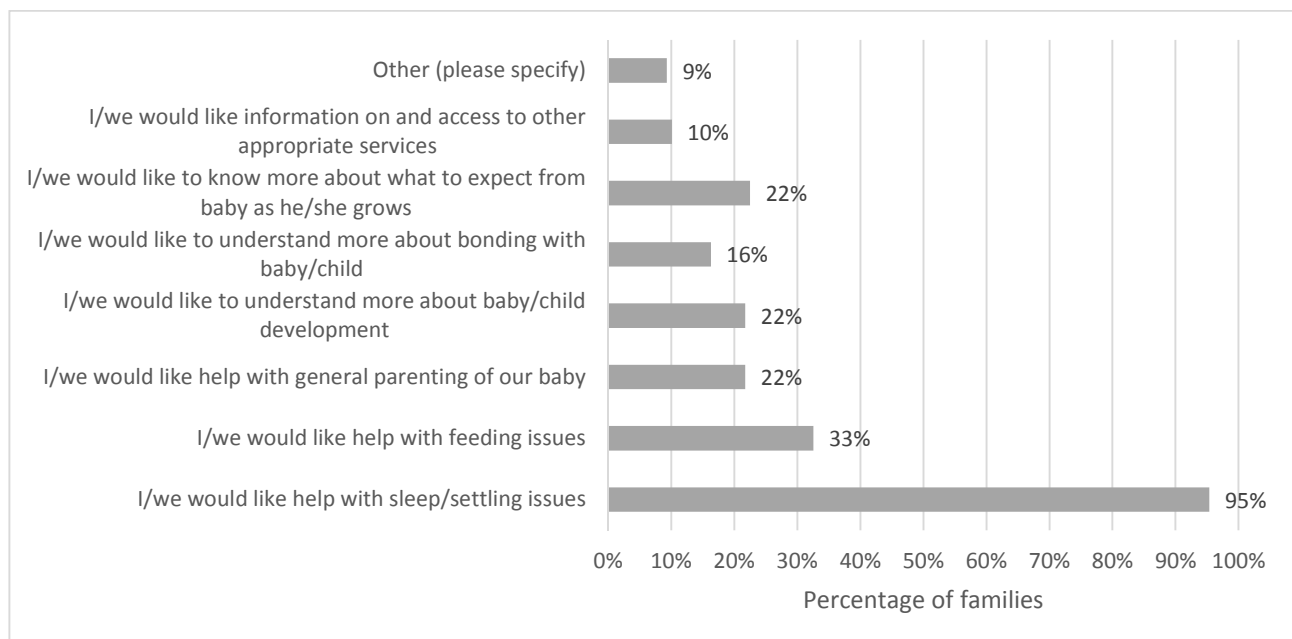
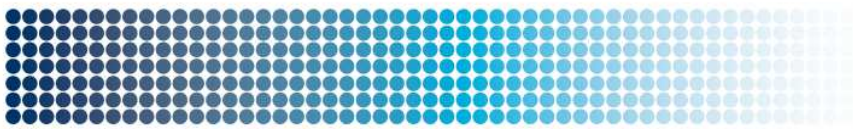


Figure 4. Percentage of families indicating they would like help with specific topics listed in the Day Stay pre-service survey.

As shown in Figure 4, nearly all respondents to the pre-service survey (95 per cent) indicated they were interested assistance with sleep and settling issues during their Day Stay session. One third wanted help with feeding issues and just under one quarter wanted information about what to expect as their baby grows; help to understand more about baby/child development; and help with general parenting of



their baby. Nine per cent of families wanted 'other' assistance, including addressing anger and frustration with the baby; returning to work; post-natal depression support; parenting groups; substance abuse; and dealing with separation anxiety.

On the whole, families who were interviewed did not consider that they had participated in 'planning' for their Day Stay session with the staff. However, six of the eight mothers reported that they felt the session was designed around their needs and their child's needs (i.e. that the session was parent and infant focused), indicating that session content had been responsive to individual parent-child dyads:

"[Staff were] interested in everything I was interested in. If it was a problem they took it on" (Day Stay mother)

"We don't necessarily plan anything, but it's more taking it how it happens. There's no real activity behind it, it's just rolling with the punches... They work to what you need. Everyone who comes in is here for one reason or another, like bubs isn't settling during the day or night or whatever, it might be because that baby's got reflux, or something else with that baby, so even though we're all in one group, they're still individually assessing what your needs are." (Day Stay mother)

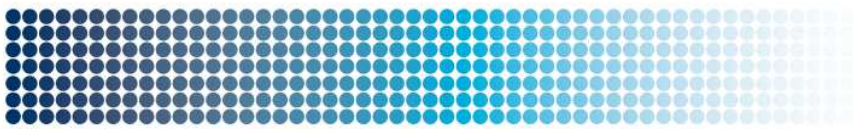
Reflecting on session planning and the staff's focus on parent and child needs, the two remaining mothers commented that they thought Day Stay was only about babies' sleep and settling. While one of these mothers was only interested in this type of help, the other indicated that it would have been good to learn about a wider variety of topics on the day. She commented that she did not bring these up with staff at the time, but reflected that if she had asked during the session, she was sure staff would have addressed these things with her:

"We just chatted more than anything. ...[It would have been good for them to] teach me how to play with her or something, but they covered more just sleeping. I would have known how to stimulate her more. I probably could have asked...I felt like I could have learnt more about feeding, maybe a conversation about it, I didn't think to bring that up either. I'm sure if I brought it up they would have addressed it." (Day Stay mother)

In their focus group, Day Stay staff commented that while sleep and settling is an important part of the Day Stay service, they do not provide a 'sleep school'. They reiterated that it is important that families, professionals and the community view and perceive the program in the holistic manner that it is intended.

Reflections from the family interviews were supported by data from the Day Stay satisfaction survey, administered from January to June 2016. Of 35 respondents, 33 (94 per cent) agreed that staff listened to them most of the time (n=4) or always (n=29). Twenty eight respondents (80 per cent) indicated that they either knew how to raise concerns with Day Stay staff, or were confident they would be able to find out how to do so.

Taken together, responses from families and staff indicate that while staff are responsive to the needs of mothers and children as they present, families are generally not aware they are involved in 'session planning' for their Day Stay and this may be a more implicit process undertaken by staff. This appears to have been effective for many families, however there may be some value in making session planning



a more explicitly joint process that staff undertake with families, to ensure that all families get the most out of their Day Stay session. The existing FamilyCare Parent Child Program Care Plan document could be used for this purpose.

Practical parenting support, advice and child development information

Both staff and families described the practical parenting support, advice and child development information Day Stay offers to families, and how this occurs throughout sessions. Survey data indicated that families have confidence in the staff's knowledge and reflected families' views that Day Stay had taught them new skills.

Staff described that their approach to providing parenting support, advice and child development information is largely dependent on the child's age and how the mother is feeling on the day. They commented that if the mother is showing signs of not coping well, it is hard to get parent-child interaction started, so instead the focus turns to trying to get more supports around her first. Staff noted that they mainly use role modelling as a core strategy to provide parenting support. They also described observing the quality of parent-child attachment and listening to what the mother says about her relationship with her child. Staff described the need to explain infant behaviour to families, to unravel assumptions about their children's behaviour and what they should or should not be doing at any particular age:

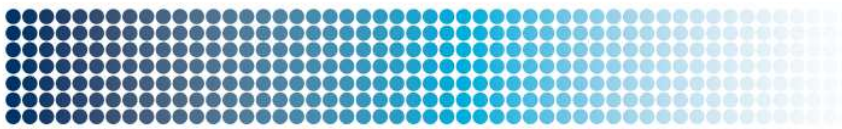
"Sometimes when parents come in with babies at a similar age they think, my baby is doing that or it's not. And then you get a chance to talk about what the expectations are. There is a lot of learning involved." (Day Stay staff member)

"One mum said the baby doesn't like her... If the baby is exhausted he's not going to like anyone. It's not so much that he doesn't like mum, [but] she's personalising and internalising it. So you've got to be worried about where she is with that infant." (Day Stay staff member)

Staff also mentioned using families' phones to take pictures of tired signs and video interactions between mothers and their babies:

"We are going to do more of that because seeing is believing. It will shift their thinking. ...that little boy was looking for mum the other day but she didn't notice, so we can show her that 'hey, someone really loves you, he's looking for you', but she was so caught up." (Day Stay staff member)

Staff reported providing Day Stay booklets to families, depending on their needs. They described the booklet as largely visual, to cater for families with low literacy and/or intellectual disability. They also reported providing information from the Raising Children Network and pamphlets from the FamilyCare office (i.e. family violence). Staff mentioned that they talk through families' Maternal and Child Health 'green books' (My Health Learning and Development Record) when families bring them along to the session. All families are asked to bring their child's green book along to Day Stay and staff are endeavour to record session outcomes in the book. This information then forms part of the child's health, learning and development record. Staff commented on the need to vary their approach to providing information and support to families, according to the needs and circumstances of each family:



“Giving them a variety of sources to access because some don’t get on the internet, others use their phone, it just depends. Our book is done just visual as well in case clients have no literacy or IDs, visual pictorial things too.” (Day Stay staff member)

“The mums we had here today would soak it up like a sponge, but maybe our child protection clients would dismiss it. So again it’s dependent on your audience. The child protection clients, even though you know they’re not taking it on board, you keep honing in on it hoping that they eventually understand where the baby is coming from. They have such unrealistic expectations on what their baby should be doing. You find yourself advocating for the baby. You say developmentally your baby is only up to that.” (Day Stay staff member)

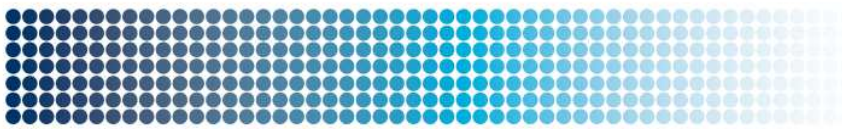
Staff reported that they had access to good professional development, felt well supported and had good access to resources in performing their roles. However, they did raise a concern about their ability to continue to provide the service within current staffing arrangements. They indicated that their work with families is intensive and demanding, and that it would be good to expand the team to relieve pressure on the three current workers. Staff indicated that maintaining current staffing arrangements may lead to worker burn out. They also considered that having an additional staff member would enable all staff to do more in-home support and follow up with families, to the great benefit of families.

All families interviewed indicated that Day Stay staff provided them with practical parenting help by observing, eliciting and supporting parent-child interactions and providing parenting advice. Mothers reported that staff role modelled and demonstrated new and different techniques to try with their babies, and gave them hints and tips on various topics of interest. Five of the eight mothers (63 per cent) also reported receiving information about child development more generally during their Day Stay via conversations and pamphlets/flyers. Issues mothers reported receiving support, advice and information about included: settling, sleep, feeding, how to wrap a baby, baby massage, changing babies, tantrums (for older children) and oral health.

Mothers made the following comments about the support, advice and information they received at Day Stay:

“[The Day Stay worker] was very good at teaching me what I should be looking for, but she was there in a practical sense to implement it and show it as well. Rather than just hearing from her what you should do, she was showing me step by step what you should be doing and what you should be looking for. Which I really needed. ...A pamphlet came home, which talked about the early tired signs. What I should be looking for, which I did refer to, because on the day there was a lot of information. So when I got home, I did refer to the information when I was trying to implement it. It talked about tired signs and a few things about settling.” (Day Stay mother)

“They’d explain to me why bubs was doing it and what I should do in that situation. How to bath the baby, how to massage the baby, change the baby, which I needed. I’d been shown a little bit in the hospital, but you don’t get much time. Because I had caesars, I didn’t really get out of bed to do much at the time. I had no family, I didn’t have anyone around to show me, or anyone that I’d watched growing up, because I was the youngest. So, I found the Day Stay really helpful.” (Day Stay mother)



One of the mothers reported that the way Day Stay staff took the time to explain the ‘why’ of what they were teaching was very beneficial, and in her view, was a point of difference between Day Stay and other early parenting services:

"A family I was speaking to on the weekend said they felt like they were being dictated to [at a service in Melbourne]. [Nurses at that service] said 'Just let the baby cry'. Here, [the worker] said 'Do you hear that cry? It's escalating, let it go a bit longer, if it gets too high in pitch, you need to go in'. So, it's explaining to you as to why you're leaving the baby crying. And how to gauge what's an ok cry, getting upset, and frantic – you need to go and soothe them. That's the difference." (Day Stay mother)

All 45 respondents to the follow up Day Stay service survey agreed that Day Stay staff were knowledgeable about parenting and babies. Forty two of 45 respondents (93 per cent) felt they had learned new skills after attending Day Stay (two responded neutral and one response was missing).

Support, information and referrals on broader issues

Staff and families also spoke about how Day Stay provides families with support, information and referrals on broader issues related to family wellbeing.

Staff mentioned providing families with a range of information, including access to FamilyCare resources (i.e. pamphlets on family violence) and other services (i.e. the Goulburn Valley Health Breastfeeding Support Service). They mentioned contacting services on behalf of families, for example calling doctors' clinics to advocate for appointment times or contacting pharmacists for advice. Staff spoke about feeling lucky that the Day Stay program is nested within FamilyCare, as this means the program has good connections with other supports and services, including Child Protection:

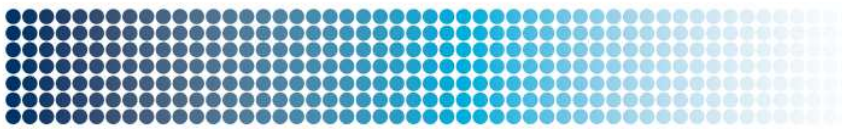
"We are lucky. If we are stuck we know there is someone for us to go, we are not isolated. We've got a good network and know where to go." (Day Stay staff member)

"The GPs know us and we write letters. We have even escorted a client on the day stay session to the GP. This is the beauty of how this works – we have that flexibility, if you are really concerned, you are able. If we were all busy we can call a duty worker to come over and help us." (Day Stay staff member)

Staff described asking mothers to represent their support network on a pie chart as part of the pre-service survey at the beginning of the Day Stay session. They described using this as a springboard to learn more about the family's situation and determine what extra support and links into the community might be appropriate:

"And one lady drew herself outside the circle and nothing in the circle, so we said right, let's get her into a mothers group and link in to what's available in the community." (Day Stay staff member)

"...And it's powerful [to see] who gets what proportion [of the pie chart]. So if the partner is not getting much, there maybe something going on there. That's the beauty of having seven hours, you don't have to address it then and there, as the day progresses you can go back to it." (Day Stay staff member)



Five of the eight mothers interviewed reported that Day Stay staff had provided them with support in relation to broader issues (beyond parenting). One of these mothers spoke about how Day Stay staff had assisted her by writing a letter to the family's doctor about her child's health. The remaining four mothers reported that Day Stay staff had been actively interested in their own wellbeing:

"The worker was really great with just calling me a week later to see how I was going. Also making sure the situation wasn't getting on top of me. She said 'Have you recently done one of those postnatal depression tests?' and I said 'Yes, the maternal health nurse has been onto that'. My husband and I are really good at communicating, but it was just reassuring that with the bigger picture stuff as well, when you are going through a bit of a crappy time, they're not just there to see that your child is feeding and sleeping, but that you're coping with the situation. That was really helpful." (Day Stay mother)

"I'm able to talk to them. I've got a background problem from my past. There was one specific lady who worked with FamilyCare that I absolutely loved because I could open up to her and talk to her. She puts me in the right direction and tells me what I should do and what she recommends I do, but I don't have to do it, it's totally up to me. I love seeing her because she advises me on my own problems and what I can do about them. And I've actually started doing it." (Day Stay mother)

"I know it's focused on sleep/settle, but I think it has much more benefit... you can really pick up other things that might be going on... The support and knowledge. You can't get it from a book. It doesn't hand you tissues when you're crying your eyes out, or laugh at you when you're doing something silly." (Day Stay mother)

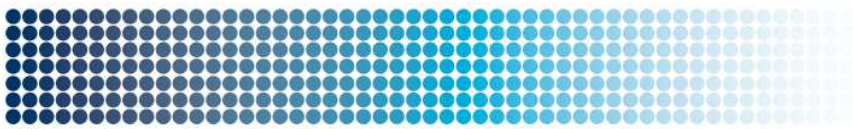
Two of the remaining three mothers did not think they needed additional support on broader issues. The final mother was only interested in help with settling and her child's sleep.

3.3.3 Follow up phone calls

Day Stay staff reported that all families receive follow up progress calls one week after their Day Stay session, however no systematic data was provided in relation to the frequency or timing of these calls. This information is currently collected in the IRIS database, but was unable to be easily extracted for analysis. Families are asked to report on progress and may receive ongoing weekly contact until they are satisfied with their progress. Day Stay staff described the amount of phone contact as being determined by families' satisfaction and or success, as well as their ongoing needs.

Families who were interviewed were not asked to comment specifically about whether or not they received follow up phone calls after their Day Stay sessions. Notwithstanding, four of the eight mothers interviewed spontaneously commented on how much they appreciated Day Stay staff following up with them over the phone subsequent to their Day Stay session:

"The follow up was exceptional. [My Day Stay worker] was calling me every week to see how I was going. She recommended, that since I was still having some challenges, to go back a second time. By that stage I'd put a lot of things into practice and they helped me fine tune it, so that was exceptional." (Day Stay mother)



"The fact that they follow up, with phone calls. That makes you feel like they actually care. They'd ring regularly to ask how things were going. If things were going good, they'd not ring that often, but if they knew that you were struggling, they'd ring and check in or give advice, or tell you to come in and do another Day Stay." (Day Stay mother)

3.3.4 Associated Day Stay support activities

Numbers of families involved in associated Day Stay support activities across the period 2011/12 to 2015/16 are summarised in Figure 5 and Figure 6.

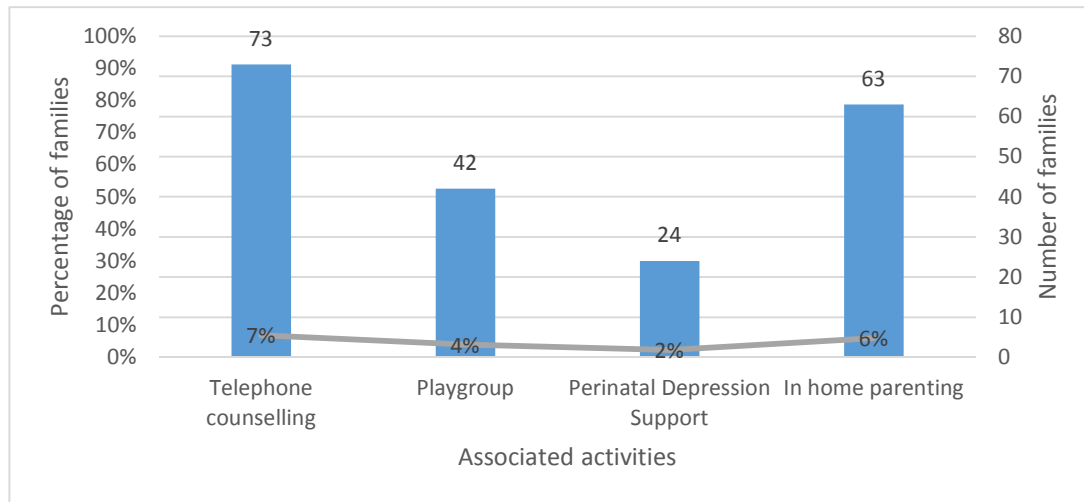


Figure 5. Numbers and percentages of Day Stay families referred to associated activities across the period 2011/12 to 2015/16 (total).

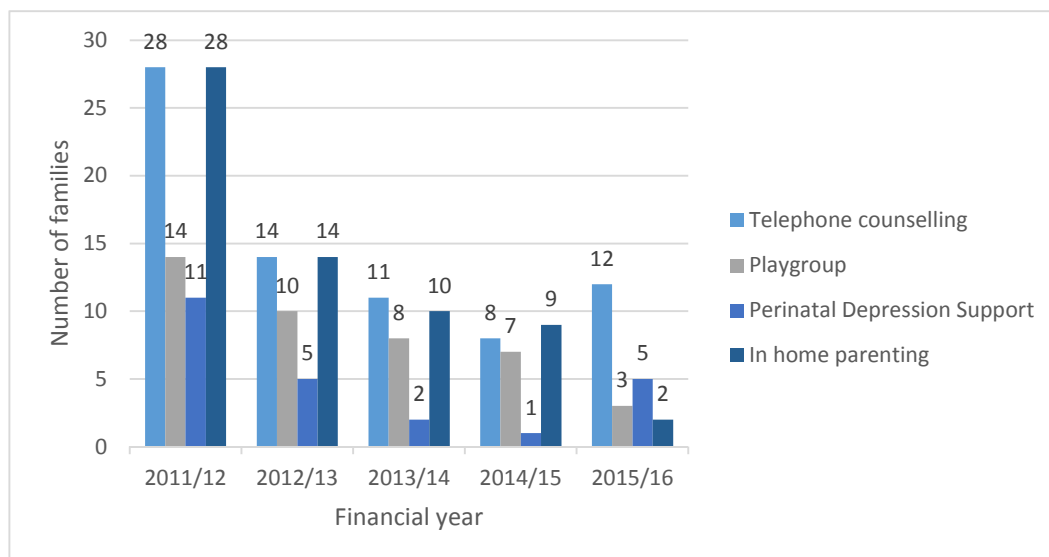
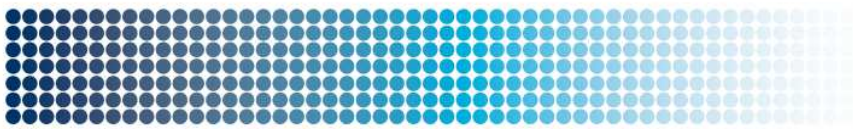


Figure 6. Numbers of Day Stay families referred to associated activities by year.

Of all associated activities, telephone counselling was the most commonly offered support to Day Stay families in the relevant five year period (offered to 7 per cent of families). As shown in Figure 4,



numbers of families referred to post Day Stay activities declined from 2011/12 to 2015/16. This reflects staff report of decreasing capacity of these additional services over the years due to funding.

No systematic administrative data was available to indicate how many families had been linked with other services by Day Stay or how many families had participated in Circle of Security.

Training and community education sessions

While a record of the number of training and community education sessions delivered by Day Stay staff was not available, Day Stay records indicated that between six to 13 families participated in these events each year in the period 2011/12 to 2015/16. Day Stay staff reported that on average, each session would be attended by around five to 10 families and some professionals, with at least one Maternal and Child Health Nursing (MCHN) student present at each session.

Day Stay records indicated that a total of 82 professionals and students had visited the program over the last five years from 2011/12 to 2015/16. A breakdown of numbers per year and visitor type is provided in Table 9.

Table 9. Number of visiting professionals and students hosted at Day Stay in the period 2011/12 to 2015/16.

Financial year	Total number	Visitor type
2011/12	18	18 MCHN students
2012/13	14	12 MCHN students, 2 graduate midwives
2013/14	18	3 student midwives, 12 medical students, 3 MCHN students
2014/15	13	1 graduate midwife, 3 MCHN students, 5 medical students, 4 social work students
2015/16	19	3 graduate midwives, 3 MCHN nurses, 8 medical students, 5 social work students
Total	82	

3.4 What impact has Day Stay had?

To assess the impact of Day Stay on parents, children, families and the community, the following questions were examined:

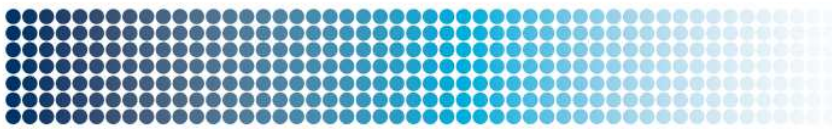
- Did Day Stay have the immediate expected impact?
- Was progress made towards longer term outcomes?

Analysis of the data presented in this section clearly shows that there has been significant progress made towards achieving Day Stay's intended impacts. There is strong evidence that all immediate (short term) outcomes are being achieved, with further evidence of progress towards the longer term outcomes articulated in the program logic. In addition, given the strength of the progress towards achieving short term outcomes, it can be implied through the program's logic that achievement of longer term outcomes will follow over time.

A summary of findings in relation to the evaluation impact indicators is presented in Table 10. Findings are elaborated fully by outcome area (parent, child, family and community) in the sections that follow.

Table 10. Summary findings in relation to impact indicators

Summary impact findings



- Six of the eight families interviewed stated they felt more confident in parenting after Day Stay. Analysis of pre and follow up service surveys showed substantial improvements in parenting confidence over the length of involvement in Day Stay.
- Seven of the eight families interviewed spoke about the things they learned about their children's needs and how to respond to them. 93 per cent of respondents to the service follow up survey agreed that they had learnt new skills after attending Day Stay and 89 per cent agreed they had been able to put into place what they learnt.
- Families found information provided about children's ages and stages of development useful. They appreciated the opportunity to attend Day Stay with other families as this provided an opportunity to observe children of different ages and learn more from other families and staff.
- Families interviewed commented that the main benefits of Day Stay for themselves had been increased support and confidence, and therefore capacity to enjoy parenting. One family made a broad comment indicating that Day Stay had improved their overall experience of their child.
- Seven of the eight families interviewed reported their child was more settled after attending Day Stay. Respondents to the service follow up survey also reported their children to be more settled following Day Stay.
- Two of the eight families interviewed stated that Day Stay had positive impacts on their family environments.
- All families interviewed reported trusting Day Stay staff and feeling supported by them. 98 percent of respondents to the service follow up survey agreed that they could speak with Day Stay staff about their concerns; 83 per cent agreed staff always listened to them and 71 per cent felt that support was always available to them when needed.
- Three families interviewed mentioned improvements in their knowledge of support services through Day Stay. Other families said they had not needed further supports. 91 per cent of respondents to the satisfaction survey agreed that Day Stay had provided them with adequate information about supports.

3.4.1 Parent outcomes

Parenting confidence

Karitane Parenting Confidence Scale (KPCS) (Črnčec, Barnett, & Matthey, 2008) data available for analysis included:

- 129 responses to the **pre-service** questionnaire (on arrival at Day Stay)
- 40 responses to the **mid-service** (end of first Day Stay session)
- 45 responses to the **follow up** (service close) questionnaire.

Matched pre and follow up surveys were available for 29 families who attended Day Stay between December 2015 and March 2016.⁴ Of the 29 families with matched pre-service and follow up KPCS scores, 23 (79 per cent) scored below the cut off on their first KPCS, indicating low levels of parenting confidence. At follow up, the number of families with low levels of parenting confidence reduced to 13 (10 per cent of matched families). The average KPCS score increased from 35 pre-service (four points below the cut off) to 41 post service (two points above the cut off).

Analysis of all non-matched scores revealed the same trends applied for the full set of data at the pre-service and follow up time points. There was a middling improvement at the mid-service time point, as summarised in Table 11. The consistent trend of improvement of total KPCS scores from start of service to end of service provides strong evidence of Day Stay's positive impact on parenting confidence.

⁴ Only two families had matched pre-service, mid-service and follow-up scores available for analysis, so comparisons for matched families focus on the pre-service and follow up data.

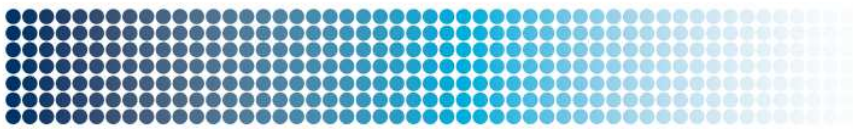


Table 11. Average KPCS scores across time, comparing matched families and all families.

	Pre-service	Mid-service	Follow up
Matched families	35 (n=29)	n/a	41 (n=29)
All families	35 (n=129)	38 (n=40)	41 (n=45)

Figure 7 provides a summary of the change in matched families’ (n=29) responses to individual KPCS items receiving a score from 0 (no, hardly ever) to 3 (yes, most of the time) (see Appendix E for the individual KPCS items). Before Day Stay, larger proportions of parents answered ‘no, not very often’ and ‘yes, some of the time’ on individual KPCS items. By contrast, at service closure, 70 per cent of responses to individual items on the scale were ‘yes, most of the time’.

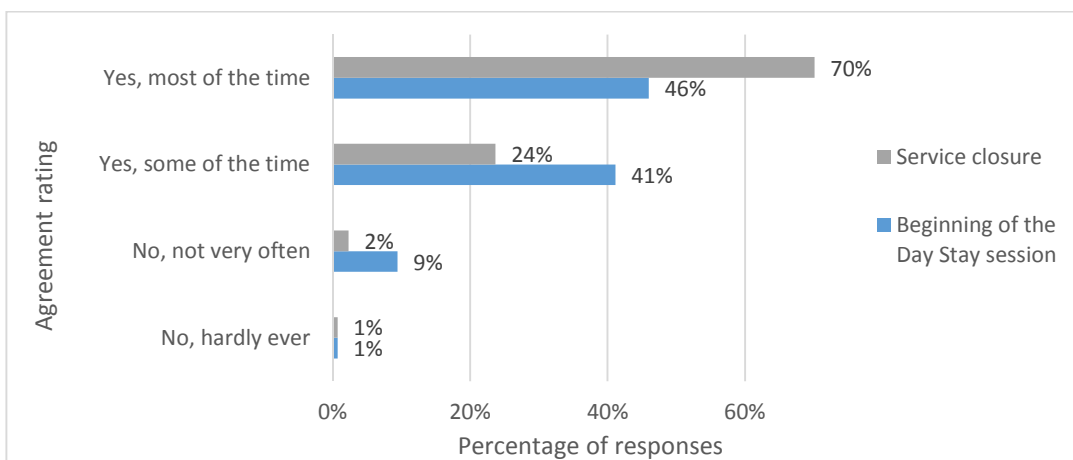


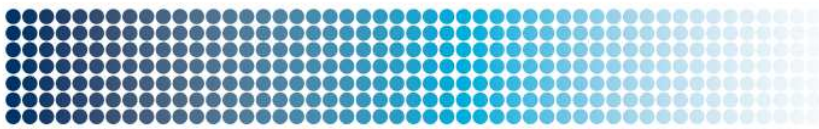
Figure 7. Percentages of responses on individual KPCS items for matched families (n=29) pre-service and at end of service.

Similarly, six of the eight families who participated in interviews stated that they felt more confident in parenting after having attended Day Stay. Families mentioned that it was the availability of expert feedback and reassurance that made them feel more confident in their parenting after Day Stay:

“It was absolutely fantastic in terms of providing me and my husband some support and helping us get our confidence back. It was our third child and we thought we knew it all, but apparently we didn’t! ...It was a very calm and comfortable place to be... It was that reassurance and helping us with our confidence.” (Day Stay mother)

“I didn’t have the confidence I was doing everything right. [My baby] would pick up on my vibes. I didn’t feel like what I was doing was wrong [but] they gave me permission that what I was doing was right.” (Day Stay mother)

“...now I feel like I’m in control now, whereas before I wasn’t.” (Day Stay mother)



Only one parent who was interviewed stated that she did not feel more confident after attending Day Stay. This was because the techniques she learned did not work for her child. The remaining parent did not comment on any change in parenting confidence.

Finally, of 45 family respondents to the follow up service questionnaire, 40 (89 per cent) agreed that they had more confidence in their parenting after attending Day Stay (four responded 'neutral' and one response was missing). Families were also asked to identify any significant change that had occurred for them as a result of attending Day Stay. Thirty nine families (87 per cent) identified significant changes. Of those, around one third (n=11) listed improved parenting confidence as their significant change:

"I am now able to more confidently identify my baby's tired signs and act on them. My confidence as a mum to my baby has improved and I feel more relaxed." (Day Stay mother)

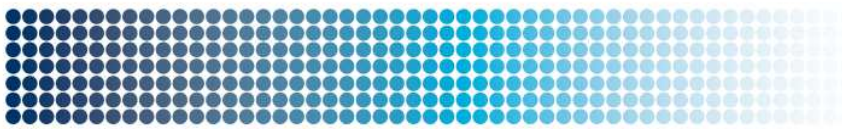
"I had more confidence with settling my babies I also learnt little signs and signals that my babies were telling me. All mothers should do this."

Learning about and responding to children's needs and developmental stages

In interviews, seven of the eight families spoke about things they had learned about their children's needs, the changing ages and stages in child development, and how to manage and respond to these. Five families mentioned learning about and managing sleep, including recognising tired signs and routines. Three mentioned feeding, two spoke of reflux and general settling, and one described learning to be more responsive through play:

"It's been four years between my kids, things change, when you start solids and all that sort of stuff, it's all changed...I've learned so much. I've learned more the second time round. The tired signs was something that made a huge difference for me. I needed some kind of factual thing. They have handouts and pictures up, all that sort of stuff. Sleep routine... With PND for myself, I had trouble engaging, so they actually taught me how to play with bubs. Naturally, I'm a very playful person, but in that moment, I wasn't. So they'd say to me: 'look, [your baby's] smiling at you, try and use this rattle and get her to roll over' things like that. So, it kept you engaged with your child." (Day Stay mother)

"I learnt about wrapping my baby... I've got five, but I've wrapped them all differently. I found out this time that there was a much better way and he can't get out, so I was really happy with that...I also learnt other stuff, like parenting at home. The advice was fantastic and I was really happy with that. When he's crying at home, what I can do to settle him, because all the signs are different. Whether he's hungry, or tired, or whether he just wanted a hug. They showed me all that and helped me with it. ...Sleeping, understanding him more, whereas before, when I first came home with him, he was a bit all over the shop. I didn't quite understand him. I've had kids in the past, but it was different this time. When I went there, I realised, every baby's different. ...[Day Stay] helps us parents on how to look after our children. Knowing the signs that they're giving us, like when they're tired, hungry, even when they want to play. I've seen a lot of mothers out here that don't pick up on it, and I think that's only because I've been to Day Stay." (Day Stay mother)



Families commented that information provided about children's ages and stages of development at Day Stay had been useful. They also considered it helpful to attend Day Stay with other families who have children at different developmental stages as this provided an opportunity to observe the changing ages and stages and ask questions of staff and other families about what to expect and how to manage it. Families said that they learned from listening to staff explain different aspects of child development to other families and asking questions related to future developmental milestones:

"It's the fact that you can ask a wide variety of questions. Even though my bubs is four months, I can ask questions about what's going to be happening at six months and they're happy to answer questions. ... The conversations we have with other Mums is because of that, because we're at different points or dealing with different things. Staff would suggest try this... or try that... and I'll be sitting there asking 'why would you do that?' ... People who have had previous kids have different experiences. Lots of advice and you choose what you need out of it." (Day Stay mother)

"I refer back to the little flyer they gave us that said depending on your age, a rough idea of how much they should sleep and feed and how many times a day, which was really reassuring. So, that education and the flyers they gave were good and very helpful." (Day Stay mother)

Likewise, of 45 family respondents to the post Day Stay service survey, 42 (93 per cent) agreed that they had learnt new skills after attending Day Stay (two responded neutral and one response was missing) and 40 (89 per cent) agreed that they had been able to put into place what they learnt at Day Stay (four responded neutral and one response was missing). Forty two families (93 per cent) also agreed that the strategies they learnt at Day Stay would help them in future (two responded neutral and one response was missing).

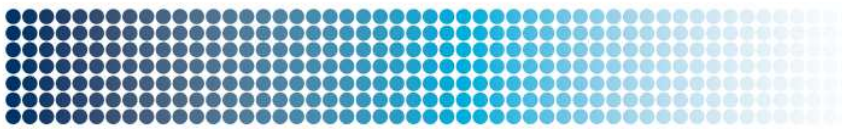
Taken together, findings presented in this section suggest that parents have learned about their children's needs and development (short term outcomes), as well as how to respond to these needs and differing developmental stages (medium term) through Day Stay. With reference to the program logic, these findings infer that progress is also therefore being made towards the long term outcome that Day Stay parents are able to support their child's transition through developmental stages.

Parents' enjoyment in parenting

In interviews, families commented on the benefits of Day Stay for parents and carers. The most prominent benefit, mentioned by five families, related to feeling supported and more confident in their parenting role. Families emphasised that the support at Day Stay provided them with a break and that this was highly beneficial when they had been struggling with the demands of parenting.

"Support and having someone there to talk to if I needed. At a certain point in the day, they let you just lay down and rest. After they've taught you the techniques, they just give you a bit of a break." (Day Stay mother)

"Definitely the support. I was struggling a lot. And the knowledge of someone else. I think that the support and knowledge comes from someone outside of your family and your friends. You always have people telling you you're not feeding them enough, you're not doing this, you need to do this, but everyone's got their own input. Coming from someone who is an expert in the field, who has done it on a daily basis with how many other babies, was really useful to me. I



was getting a bit jack of everyone telling me what I should and shouldn't be doing. I knew this was coming from a really knowledgeable place." (Day Stay mother)

One family made broad comments about how their experience of Day Stay had improved their overall experience of their child:

"I feel like had I not gone, our experience would have been completely different with our baby. I think it taught us so much about her, what her needs were, what our needs were and how to help her with sleeping. Now we have the perfect little baby in terms of sleeping and none of it has been a stress. So we've got to that point in a really calm, productive way. There's a fear about sleep programs that they cry it out, but it's never been like that, it's never been stressful or anything. It's a lot more calm and everyone's a lot happier for it. ...It was so beneficial. It basically changed our experience with our baby." (Day Stay mother)

Together, these observations suggest that Day Stay is having a positive impact on parent wellbeing and parent-child relationships, and therefore, parents' capacity to enjoy parenting. As a result, and in accordance with the program logic (and the evidence that relevant short and medium term outcomes are being achieved), it can be inferred that progress is being made towards Day Stay's long term parent outcome of increasing parents' enjoyment of parenting.

3.4.2 Child outcomes

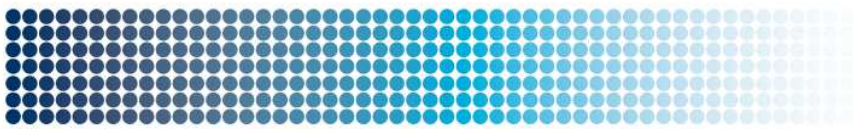
Children are settled, healthy, happy and thriving

Seven of the eight families interviewed reported that their children were more settled after attending Day Stay. Seven families reported that children were sleeping better and two reported children were feeding better, were happier and healthier. One family reported their children had responded positively to a more consistent routine and one said their child was exhibiting improved development.

Families' comments on the benefits they observed Day Stay had for their children included:

"Ever since that second stay, I implemented a few more things, and my child has been sleeping. It's been amazing. ... Obviously sleep is necessary, but the flow on effects from him sleeping properly are that he is much, much happier. He's not whingeing around after me all the time, he's shown a lot more development after he'd been to the Day Stay. He started doing things that he wasn't doing before. I think it was because he was not tired all the time, so he had the energy to do new things. ... We were trying to get him to feed himself with fingerfood, but he just wouldn't do it. He'd just sit there with his arms by his side, waiting for you to feed him. He really got cranky about it when we tried to get him to feed himself. Once he'd been to Day Stay and he was sleeping, he just started feeding himself quite happily. I think it was because he was not so tired, whereas before he didn't want to do anything extra because he was tired all the time." (Day Stay mother)

"[My child] went from never sleeping during the day to sleeping on her own. The medication was what we needed, but nowhere else could we get the right advice. ... She was much happier once she started sleeping better, it was a cycle. Once we calmed down, she calmed down. I feel like all the pieces of the puzzle just fell into place." (Day Stay mother)



“Better consistency with how to settle him. We’re pretty strict with what we do and when we pop him down, following what they encouraged us to do. He benefits from that because he knows what to expect when we’re putting him to bed. And advice on the feeding side of things. Obviously a benefit is that now we have the correct people and professionals helping us and I have a child who can feed and sleep and grow now, so it’s worked out well for everyone.” (Day Stay mother)

The remaining family responded that there had been no benefits for their baby. This mother noted that none of the Day Stay strategies had worked for her child, but this may have been because he was ‘too old’ for the intervention (at eight months old), and it may have been more successful if they had have attended earlier.

Children’s needs are responded to appropriately

Comparison of responses to several individual items on the KPCS at pre-service and at follow up provide an indication of the impact of Day Stay on parents’ own perceived abilities to respond to their child’s needs, and thus a proxy bearing on whether children’s needs are being responded to appropriately. Percentages of matched families (n=29) providing the maximum response to several relevant items on the KPCS pre and post Day Stay, are summarised in Figure 8 (see Appendix E for the full list of KPCS items). Increases in the percentage of maximum KPCS responses (‘Yes, most of the time’) from pre-service to follow up (end of service) provides proxy evidence of improvements in parents’ responses to children’s needs.

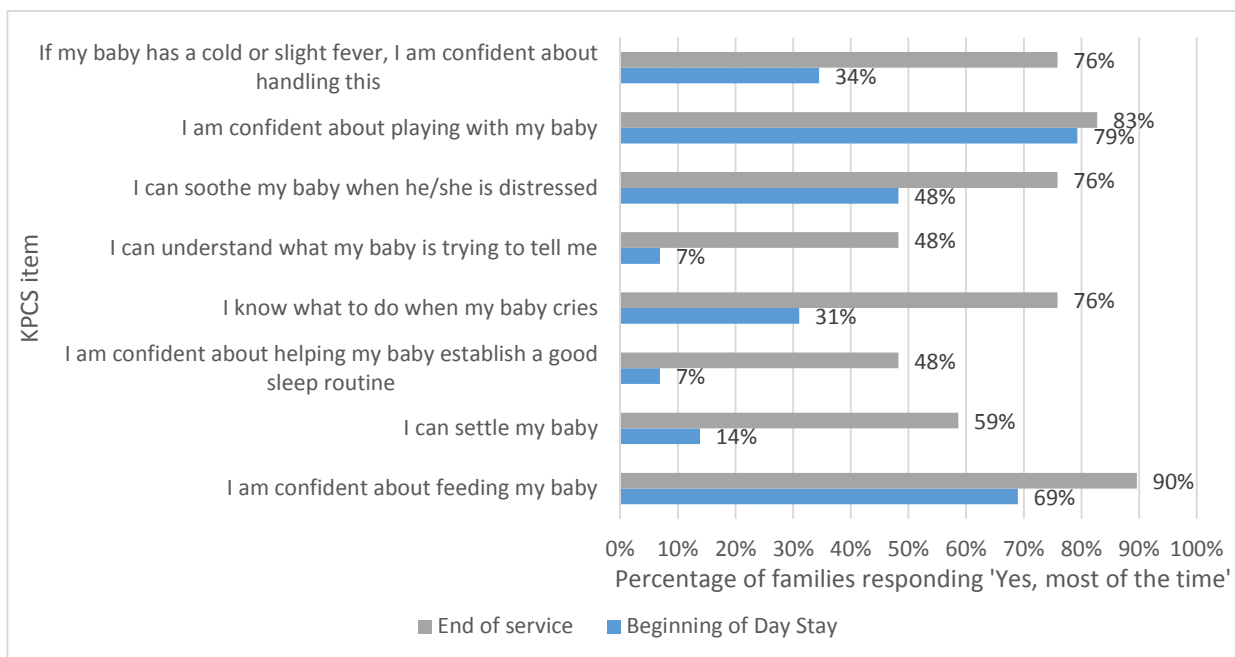
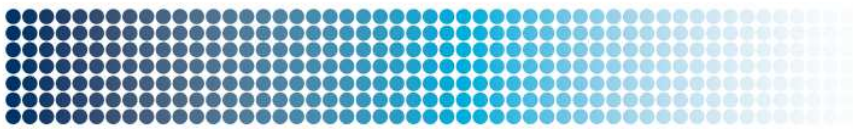


Figure 8. Percentage of families responding ‘Yes, most of the time’ to KPCS items relating to responding to children’s needs pre and post Day Stay.

Figure 8 shows large percentage increases in the proportion of parents providing the maximum response in multiple areas, indicating improved confidence in feeding, settling, establishing good sleep routines, knowing what to do when the child cries, understanding the child’s signals, soothing and



dealing with illness. Most families (79 per cent) were already confident about playing with their baby, but even in relation to this there was an increase in the proportion of families choosing the maximum response (83 per cent).

That 89 per cent of respondents to the follow up service survey reported being able to put into place what they learned at Day Stay provides further evidence of the program's impact on improving the way that children's needs are responded to. Families' general comments on the survey provided further insight into the impact of the program for children:

"I have had extreme improvements in my baby's sleep behaviour since attending day stay on two occasions. He was previously waking every one and half hours and would not sleep during the day. He now sleeps through the night and has solid day time naps. I am extremely happy that I was referred to this service, it has been a lifesaver." (Day Stay mother)

"[Day Stay staff] were very helpful and gave great advice on how to help [my daughter] with her reflux e.g. ways to hold [her] that would give comfort to her tummy and also expressing that [she] could need more medication, which was correct." (Day Stay mother)

"I have learnt to read my baby better which has helped me put her to sleep and she is sleeping better and longer as a result." (Day Stay family)

3.4.3 Family outcomes

Family environments are positive and family relationships are strong

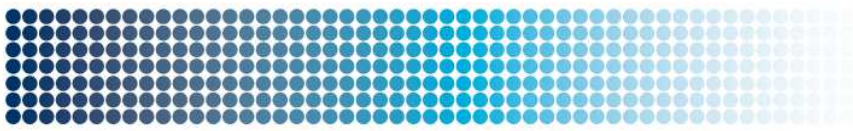
Two of the eight families interviewed commented directly about the positive impact attending Day Stay had on their family environments. For both families, the support and advice offered at Day Stay enabled parents and infants to function better together and they reflected that this had wider impacts for the rest of the family:

"It was just helping her be able to get more rest so that she could be happier. And then that helped the family because I was able to put her to bed with minimum fuss. Then I could concentrate on the other children or whatever else I had to do. And just feeling more relaxed, which benefited the whole family. The more tense you are, the more prone you can be to snapping at responses or less patient. Just general tiredness. If she sleeps better, I sleep better." (Day Stay mother)

A respondent to the satisfaction survey also commented on the broader impact of Day Stay on their family:

"My baby and family unit are doing much better. It was so nice to hear we were doing all we could for our baby and this built confidence in all of us." (Day Stay family)

As outlined earlier, one family commented that learning about their child and how to manage their child through Day Stay had changed their whole experience of the child, positively impacting parent-child and overall family relationships.



3.4.4 Community outcomes

Parents trust practitioners and feel supported

In interviews, families provided strong feedback that they trusted Day Stay staff and felt supported by them, as outlined in earlier sections of this report. Forty four (98 per cent) of the 45 respondents to the post service survey agreed that they could speak with Day Stay staff about their concerns. Of the 35 respondents to the client satisfaction survey, 29 (83 per cent) agreed that staff always listened to them, while four (11 per cent) indicated this happened most of the time and two (six per cent) agreed that this occurred sometimes. Twenty five respondents (71 per cent) indicated that support was always available when needed (seven responded most of the time and three responded sometimes).

Parents remain engaged with Day Stay staff, seek support, and families are connected to the community

Families who were interviewed overwhelmingly appreciated Day Stay's comprehensive phone follow up and also expressed that after their experience of Day Stay, they were comfortable about contacting Day Stay staff if any future problems arose:

"I really appreciate this service and that it was available to me as soon as I needed it. Thank you so much girls for such amazing one-on-one help and advice. It's wonderful I can call you both if I need to, that is great to know as well." (Day Stay family)

Three of the families interviewed mentioned improvements in their knowledge of family support services through Day Stay, including support for post-natal depression, more intensive sleep programs and other resources in the community. Of 35 respondents to the satisfaction survey, 32 (91 per cent) agreed that Day Stay had provided them with adequate information about supports (one disagreed and the remaining two were unsure).

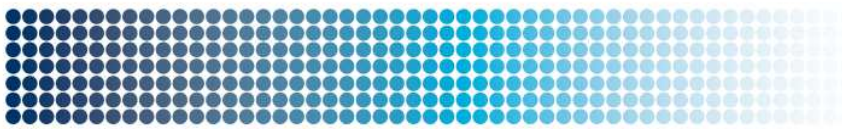
The strong relationships Day Stay staff develop with families during their involvement with the service appears to facilitate ongoing engagement with Day Stay via phone and repeat visits. This fosters families' abilities and confidence to reach out for support when needed, providing positive experiences of service support. Observations about how families have interacted with and maintained engagement with Day Stay staff indicate that the program is making progress towards the long term outcome that parents seek support from services and families are connected to the community.

3.5 To what extent is Day Stay valued as an important local parent and child support?

Feedback from families and stakeholders, supported by comments made by staff, indicated that Day Stay is held in very high regard in the local community. Feedback suggested that the service is widely appreciated and is currently addressing a clear community need. It is highly valued for its extensive and practical content which addresses families' early parenting needs; its high quality; its accessibility; and the active role Day Stay staff play in driving and supporting change to improve the broader service system supporting young children and their families in the region.

3.5.1 Stakeholders

All four stakeholders who participated in interviews for the evaluation valued the Day Stay service very highly. Their perceptions of the value of the service as an important local parent and child support in the



community can be broadly conceptualised in four broad themes: meeting families' needs; quality of the program; access to the program; and role in the service system.

Meeting families' needs

All four stakeholders viewed Day Stay as an essential service in the region. This was largely due to the opportunity it provides for parents to access direct, practical help from early childhood professionals who provide parenting assistance during the critical adjustment to a new child. They considered a strength of the program was the availability of a full day of in-person support, which is flexible enough to meet families' diverse needs, from feeding and settling, to safety and the parent's emotional wellbeing. To this end, one stakeholder described Day Stay as a "very comprehensive service" and all four stakeholders valued the program as an important preventative intervention, to address a wide range of difficulties that otherwise may progress to become significant issues for families:

"I think broadly, that type of service is really, really valuable to families and goes a long way towards both preventing more significant issues in terms of adjustment to parenthood and emotional wellbeing and support of parents, their infants and children. It's addressing something that is a really significant issue for parents of infants and young children. Things like sleep and support for their parenting and support for their emotional and mental wellbeing. I think those things are hugely important at a time when they're going through a really major life adjustment. ...it's addressing things that parents see as really important." (Stakeholder)

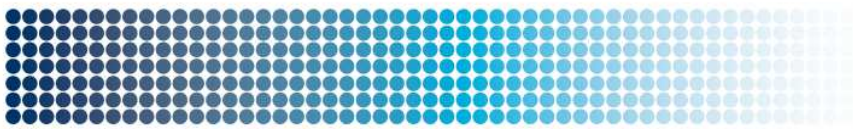
"[Day Stay is] absolutely critical. We're in a situation where we've lost our perinatal emotional health and wellbeing program at Goulburn Valley Health... Day Stay is vital, it's an essential service... [it provides] the opportunity to come in and spend some time in a trusted, secure environment for the mother or father, parent and child and be able to go through the cycle of day to day care and observe what the issues are for the mother. That ability to observe, to coach, to encourage, to just have a space in the actual Day Stay where parents can come in and be supported and be able to talk honestly about what's happening and gain the support they need." (Stakeholder)

One stakeholder mentioned that some families had found the service's routine fairly rigid and others had reported finding it distressing to persist with techniques when their child was upset. This stakeholder commented that these observations were balanced by a large amount of feedback indicating that families were happy with the service, and reflected:

"I guess, to a degree, I think you're always going to get that. I think that's where it's really important that the parents are involved in the process, what's going to happen and what the parameters are." (Stakeholder)

Quality

Stakeholders viewed the quality of the Day Stay service as high. They commented that the high calibre of the staff, their passion and their extensive experience was critical to the success of Day Stay and a core reason why it is well-respected by professionals and families alike:



*“They’re highly experienced in managing sleep issues. Highly experienced in managing issues with feeding. Vast experience of topics that are relevant to families attending Day Stay.”
(Stakeholder)*

“I find the staff are good to work with. In terms of colleagues working in the same space, who are passionate about trying to improve outcomes for children in our community, I don’t think you’d get more passionate or committed staff who work really hard in what they do. That’s obviously a real strength.” (Stakeholder)

Other quality aspects of the service stakeholders valued included Day Stay’s thorough follow up processes (with both families and professionals), and the comfortable service environment:

“The follow up the team has with the clients who pass through their doors, even if they’re not seen physically again... We’re often aware that they stay in contact with the family and call them back.” (Stakeholder)

“They follow up their clients, they liaise with local MCH staff. It’s a high ratio of staff to clients. I’ve been there on several occasions when the program’s been running and it’s a very supportive environment.” (Stakeholder)

“It’s a really lovely environment there, their home-style environment. It’s housed in a 50s style brick house in the centre of town. It’s very accessible to our clients. It has a very encompassing feel to it.” (Stakeholder)

One stakeholder, however, did express a view that Day Stay’s follow up with referring services could be improved:

“...I think [Day Stay staff] need to write a short letter. I’ve had a couple of phone calls recently, which was really good...Even a few lines, just to say what happened and how [the families] were. They would have to get permission from the participant. I just think it would be really helpful for nurses if we did get some kind of feedback...A worker rang me about a mum she was really concerned about her mental health. And she’d referred her. That was really helpful. But normally, nothing.” (Stakeholder)

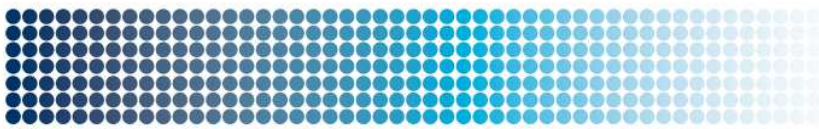
Stakeholders reflected that the fact that families use and like the service is a good indication of its quality:

“I see the strengths as being I think it’s highly regarded by families in the area. They’re happy to go there. That’s not something that we can always easily say.” (Stakeholder)

*“There would be very few clients over the course of my experience with Day Stay who have reported dissatisfaction. Most of them, the responses would be: I wish I’d gone earlier.”
(Stakeholder)*

Access

In terms of access, stakeholders commented that proximity of the service to families in their local area was key. All four stakeholders described a lack of other services for infants and parents in their region,



and valued the fact that Day Stay is free and is often quick and easy for families to get into and physically travel to. Stakeholders emphasised the need for local early parenting services, as travel was often a significant barrier for young families, and more so for those who are socially isolated, vulnerable or otherwise hesitant to access services located further away, outside of their comfort zone (i.e. in Melbourne):

“For people here, it’s particularly important because whilst a lot of us living somewhere like Shepparton may easily access services in Melbourne, for some people, travelling to Melbourne to access a service like that is really problematic. It’s a real barrier. I can’t tell you the number of times that I’ve talked to families about similar services in Melbourne that they could access, but they just don’t. I think it’s a little bit like when they have a mood disorder and because of their situation, they’re just not in the headspace where they can do what they need to do.... If you’ve got parents who are not coping and they’re sleep deprived, the idea of giving them something that when they’re well and coping well, would be difficult to do, in that situation, it’s just almost impossible. I think we do need services that are local that families can access, particularly for us, given that we’ve recently lost funding for the perinatal emotional health program that families found hugely supportive. I think we need a suite of services that we can offer to families and this is one of those services.” (Stakeholder)

“I had a child the other day who should have gone down to the Children’s Hospital for a birthmark, but the parents have never driven in Melbourne and weren’t prepared to take her. If you say you’ve got to go to Melbourne or Albury to do something like this, they just won’t even consider it. If you can say ‘you can go down to Seymour or Shepparton’...they’re used to going there to do their shopping and they’re happy to go there... We have very few services around [in Strathbogie]. It is one of the few services that we do have. So it’s very important for Strathbogie ...there’s no services located in the Shire except for GPs and [MCH].” (Stakeholder)

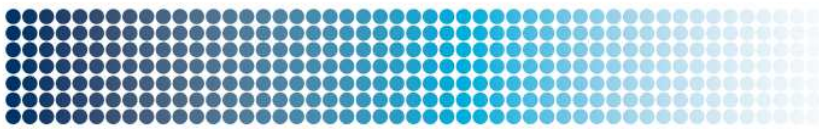
“There’s less services, so the ones you have are more important. If you lived in Melbourne, you might be able to drive across suburbs to another service if the one that you were with was full or you didn’t particularly like the way it was operated. Whereas for here, the Day Stay program is the only one, so it’s essential. And I know people travel from a wide radius to come and attend it. That shows how vital it is, and the fact that you can attend multiple times if you need to. There’s open contact, you can ring in if you need to. They’ve got a telephone counselling aspect to it. I believe in the past there was a home visiting component to it.” (Stakeholder)

Stakeholders also commented that families being able to access Day Stay held further value for the local service system by taking some burden away from local Maternal and Child Health services:

“To be able to access something like Day Stay pretty quickly is good. It’s good for us [MCH nurses] because we’re not having to see these families a couple of times per week.” (Stakeholder)

Role in the service system

Two stakeholders spoke about the valuable contributions Day Stay staff make to the broader service system. They indicated that Day Stay staff are highly engaged in broader service development and take an active role on local working groups, with a strong presence various initiatives including the Shepparton Best Start partnership and working groups (e.g. breastfeeding working group),



Communities for Children, The Bridge adolescent antenatal program, a postnatal depression project and the local early years reference group. These stakeholders described Day Stay staff as “very engaged” in service development conferences and consultations, and noted FamilyCare’s driving advocacy role in relation to the establishment of a local Mother-Baby unit.

One stakeholder considered that Day Stay could do more to ‘sell’ the service out in the community by taking more opportunities to publicise the service at local events and conferences, providing handouts of information to new staff at other agencies, and providing more information about the service model, what they do and what techniques they use on the FamilyCare website.

3.5.2 Families

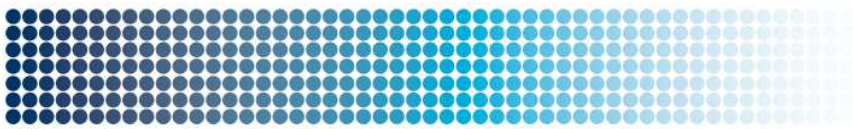
In interviews, families echoed similar themes to stakeholders in terms of the value of Day Stay. They spoke at length about the importance of being able to access high quality, hands-on early parenting services, particularly in their local area:

“I think the biggest challenge that lots of Mums face is that we are raising children really isolated. Although we’ve got all the social media and advice around, when it comes to the day to day stuff, so many women, in particular if they’re staying home, are really isolated and there’s no such thing as a village anymore. So if you can’t do something that’s a bit tricky, you feel like you have to slog it out. ...I think FamilyCare provide that new village to mothers and fathers when they’re at a point or at a crossroads where they say ‘I don’t know what to do, how to help my baby sleep or feed or whatever the problem may be....’ ... There are so many people in Echuca/Moama who are using the service over in Shepparton because there’s nothing here for families. I tell people about it and I know a lot of women around me, friends or friends of friends and they’ve used it, or they’re using it now, or they’re booked in the future. There’s a definite need. People don’t know what to do or where to go, or they’re not finding the Maternal and Child Health resources enough. They’re fantastic, but when it comes to the day to day, you’ve actually got to live this experience.” (Day Stay mother)

“I think it’s super important for mothers’ mental health, which I think is a huge issue. Post-natal depression: I think it is definitely a step that could stop people going down that path if they were struggling. I think that’s really important to address that issue in the community before it gets out of hand. Something as simple as a Day Stay where people help you, can make a massive impact on that...Also from a baby’s development – it’s crucial that they’re sleeping...I think it’s a really almost dangerous predicament to new mums to not have a service like that in the community and one that’s easily accessible. It’s extremely important and you can’t underestimate how much services like this are needed for new mums, and that they feel that it’s easily accessible and they feel that it’s something they can get information about and they know about.” (Day Stay mother)

One mother commented about how she had been referred to Day Stay and a service in Melbourne at the same time. At the time of her interview (six months post-referral) she had successfully completed her involvement with Day Stay, but was still yet to even hear from the service in Melbourne:

“Being in a remote area...I have to travel, the only other alternative is Melbourne and there’s a massive, massive waiting list for some of those places at the sleep and settle school. And a lot of them aren’t in the public health system, so it’s a massive cost for anyone. That’s why I didn’t



utilise those. I didn't have the time to take a newborn baby to Melbourne. At the same time I think a referral went to the Mercy Hospital at the same time as the referral to the Day Stay and I still haven't heard back from the Mercy. We're talking six month wait. I'd possibly still be sitting here with a child who wouldn't feed. I think it's very important to save on that travel time. A lot of people prefer to stick local and have that local support. It's definitely worth it. I think it's something that a lot of people use." (Day Stay mother)

Another mother suggested that although Day Stay was highly valued in the community, there was a considerable gap in the availability of extended overnight early parenting services in the region:

"It's a massive gap. These guys do as much as they can with sleep/settle, but it would be lovely to have a place where you can stay overnight. It would be lovely to have a mother-baby unit in Shep. All those sort of things. This is it. This is what we've got. We're lucky to have such a great set-up, plus experienced staff." (Day Stay mother)

Families' responses to the Day Stay satisfaction survey also shed light on the value of the service as perceived by families. Of 35 respondents to survey between January and June 2016, 33 (94 per cent) were either satisfied or very satisfied with Day Stay; agreed that Day Stay had made a difference; and rated the service quality as good or very good. Thirty-two families (91 per cent) indicated that Day Stay had met most to all of their needs. Families' responses to these questions from the Day Stay satisfaction survey are summarised in Table 12.

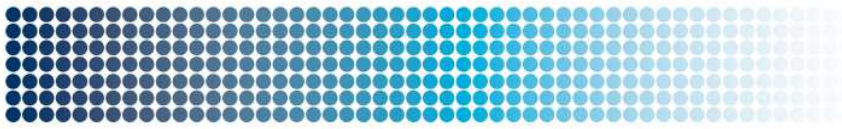
Table 12. Day Stay satisfaction survey responses

Survey question	Rating				
Did the service meet your needs?	<i>None</i>	<i>Few</i>	<i>Most</i>	<i>Almost all</i>	<i>All needs met</i>
	3%	6%	3%	26%	63%
Did the service make a difference?	<i>No, worse</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes, slightly</i>	<i>Yes moderately</i>	<i>Yes a great deal</i>
	0%	6%	3%	40%	51%
Service quality rating	<i>Very poor</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Very Good</i>
	0%	3%	3%	11%	83%
Overall satisfaction	<i>Very dissatisfied</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Indifferent</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Very Satisfied</i>
	0%	3%	3%	23%	71%

Many families made positive comments in the survey, praising the workers and the service:

"Day Stay was a service I was desperately in need of with a baby who would not sleep. The advice, help and support from staff including follow up was exceptional. I believe this service is integral in helping mothers and preventing postnatal depression by giving parents practical assistance. I believe I would have struggled greatly without this service." (Day Stay family)

"[The workers] from the Day Stay program were very kind, supportive, friendly and understanding. I would recommend the program and staff to other mums - which I already have! A big thank you to these two amazing, lovely women!!" (Day Stay family)



In answering the survey, three families commented that they would have preferred to get into the service earlier, with a shorter wait time. The one family who responded that they were 'dissatisfied' with the service overall and considered the service quality as 'poor' commented that they did not feel listened to or understood, and that they felt judged. They were also disappointed that the worker had forgotten what was spoken about at prior visits to Day Stay.

Some families provided suggestions of how Day Stay could have helped them more. Suggestions included: linking with other support groups, home visits and availability of extended stay options (longer than one day).

Families also praised the quality of the program and the workers in the post Day Stay service survey. One family commented that her particular worker was an asset to the local community:

"[My worker] at FamilyCare Day Stay was so knowledgeable and such a great help she really is gifted and such an asset to our community." (Day Stay family)

Another emphasised the need for programs like Day Stay in rural areas:

"I felt so lucky to have this service available to me in Cobram. I have heard from many friends who also had positive experiences. Such an important resource available to families." (Day Stay family)

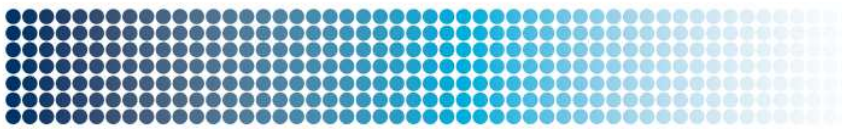
3.5.3 Staff

Staff similarly noted that the value of Day Stay to the community is that there is no other service available for parents of young children that currently offers hands-on early parenting support in the local area. They cited the broad reach of the program, for example families traveling from Swan Hill and Echuca, as evidence of its value to the community. They spoke about the long wait lists for early parenting services in Melbourne and the fact that two to three months is a very long time in the life of a young family, for example, it could mean the difference between breast and bottle feeding.

Reflecting on the value of the service to the local community, staff also spoke about support the service received when the continuation of Day Stay was in jeopardy. They reflected on how professionals and families had rallied around Day Stay, with a petition of 1,000 signatures to keep the service open. Staff mentioned that although they are not usually privy to families' feedback forms, from what they have heard, Day Stay has received highly complementary feedback.

4. Discussion

The evaluation process has uncovered many very positive findings in relation to the delivery of Day Stay, its progress towards outcomes and value to the community. It is clear that on the whole, families, stakeholders and staff view the program as functioning well, and consider that it is a vital early parenting support to children and families in the community. The evaluation has also raised some considerations for ongoing program improvement, which if implemented, would serve to further enhance and strengthen Day Stay. It has identified that the service would benefit from clearer articulation and documentation of the detail of the program; implementing a more explicit session planning process; strengthening feedback provided to referrers into the service; and further refining



ongoing program monitoring and improvement processes. These considerations are raised in the sections below, with summary actions presented at the end of each area for improvement.

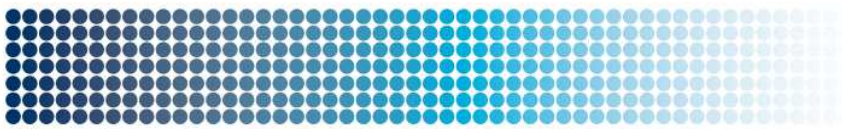
4.1 Articulating and documenting program detail

The exercise of re-defining the program's logic as part of this evaluation was helpful for staff and service leadership to consider the key elements of Day Stay by re-defining its inputs, activities, outputs and expected outcomes. This helped staff to unpack their way of working and give considered thought to the different aspects of Day Stay. However, it was not possible to delve into the next level of detail in terms of the specifics of what particular parenting techniques are implemented by staff and how, as it was necessary to focus on clarifying the service model at a higher level first. Updating the existing staff manual to contain the detail of exactly what staff do within each activity area would be a useful next step in the process of defining the Day Stay service model. Assembling this information would enable more comprehensive assessment of the alignment of the service with the evidence and best practice.

Evaluation findings indicate that the current Day Stay staff team are a highly skilled, high functioning unit, who work well together to implement the service. Although the service is functioning well with the current team of staff, sustainability of the program beyond this team is an additional reason why the specifics of Day Stay's operations should be documented in more detail. Updating the program manual to contain detail of the techniques and theoretical approaches used as part of Day Stay activities would enable replication of the program by other staff and/or organisations, ensuring the program could be implemented with fidelity by other teams and/or in other locations. It is important that staff involved in delivery of parenting programs are familiar with the relevant literature and particular approaches underlying the program they are involved with (e.g. family centred, developmental parenting). Documenting these in relation to Day Stay would ensure a common, shared understanding of the program is able to endure, independent of which individuals are involved with the program at any one time.

In addition to an updated program manual, consideration should be given to further developing the Day Stay program logic. Through the evaluation process, it became clear that additional inputs contribute to the service model, including program guidance materials, and staff supervision, professional development and support arrangements. These foundational inputs underlie the ongoing sustainability of the service and so should be captured by the program logic. In addition, once the details of program activities are further defined, or as a guide for the process of defining this detail, the short term outcomes that refer to 'children's needs' in a broad sense could be further specified to focus in on the specific needs the service seeks to address. Recognising that flexibility is an asset of the current Day Stay service model, it is also important for the program to have a clear focus in relation to the core needs it seeks to address. Revisiting the list of associated activities would also be of benefit to clarify the scope of the program, particularly in relation to whether or not there is an intention to reinvigorate associated activities that have declined in frequency over the years (i.e. playgroup and home visiting) and to clarify the relationship between Day Stay and activities that are delivered outside of the program, i.e. Circle of Security. Tightening these aspects of the program logic will assist to focus the delivery of the service, facilitate its implementation by new or future staff and to provide a strong basis for future evaluation.

Updating program documentation would also provide an opportunity to review and record processes for staff supervision, professional development and support arrangements. Although staff reported that current support they receive to deliver the program was good, concerns raised about the potential for



burn out and need for additional staff indicate that attention to these areas is important to maintain the high standard of service delivered by the current team.

Summary of suggested actions:

- *Document the particular techniques workers use in each activity area*
- *Document underlying theoretical approaches behind techniques implemented*
- *Review and document processes for staff supervision, professional development and support*
- *Re-visit program logic to:*
 - *Update inputs (include program manual, staff supervision, PD and support)*
 - *Update activities with additional detail of techniques*
 - *Clarify scope of program re: associated activities*
 - *Is there an intention to re-instate regular home visiting and playgroup as part of the program? If not, remove*
 - *Should Circle of Security be listed under referrals to other services, given it sits outside of the Day Stay program?*
 - *Make short term outcomes re: 'child needs' more specific*

4.2 Session planning

Feedback indicated that most families were satisfied with the topics covered in their Day Stay session, suggesting that existing planning processes are generally acceptable to families. However, the process evaluation found that at the moment, session planning is not necessarily an explicit process that families are aware they are engaging in with staff. Undertaking an explicit, documented planning process in partnership with families at the beginning of their Day Stay session would ensure that Day Stay care plans address all issues most salient to parents. This goes some way to eliminate the risk that unarticulated interests or thoughts are not addressed, empowering parents to contribute their voice into the structure of the session. The existing FamilyCare Parent Child Program Care Plan document can be used for this purpose. Taking a partnership approach to planning will build on the family centred strengths of the Day Stay service, ensuring that families feel heard and understood, a key factor necessary to promote families' successful service engagement.

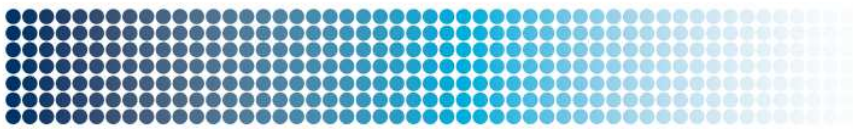
Summary of suggested action:

- *Ensure FamilyCare Parent Child Program Care Plan form is completed jointly by family and practitioner at the start of the session and parents understand that they have active input into the session plan*

4.3 Feedback to referrers

While the evaluation found that Day Stay staff are active in connecting with other services and professionals in the community to advocate for and source information for families, some stakeholders suggested there may be scope for improvement in the feedback provided to referrers about families who have attended Day Stay. Stakeholders indicated that on the occasions where feedback has been received, this has been highly valuable to the referring service. FamilyCare could consider implementing a standard referrer feedback process where, with families' consent, referrers are notified of families' attendance at Day Stay, the topics covered, a brief reflection on status of the family by the end of the session and any information about Day Stay's ongoing work and follow up with the family. Establishing and using a template to guide this process may assist to standardise information exchange between Day Stay and referring services. It may also assist the local service system to provide more coordinated and efficient support to those families.

Summary of suggested actions:



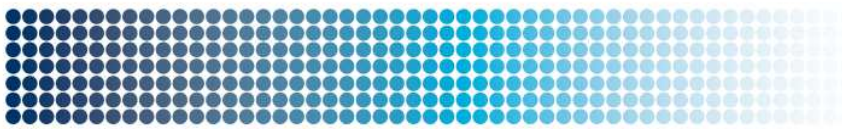
- *Create a template for standard feedback to referrers of families who attend Day Stay (to be provided to referrers with families' consent)*
- *Could contain:*
 - *When the family attended Day Stay*
 - *Topics covered*
 - *Reflection on status at end of Day Stay*
 - *Projected ongoing work and follow up*
- *Provide completed feedback form to all referrers once families have attended Day Stay*

4.4 Ongoing program monitoring and improvement

FamilyCare and the Day Stay team should be commended on their commitment to collecting extensive data on the Day Stay service over many years. There was a wealth of administrative data available for analysis in this evaluation, which provided important insights into the program's operations over the relevant five-year period. The process of collating and organising the data so that it could be subjected to analysis was a learning process for all involved. It highlighted some issues in relation to the complexity of consulting multiple databases and sources, and helped to develop staff's understanding of how and what information is currently recorded; what that information means for practice; and how it can be used to inform service reflection and planning. There are some aspects of the program where data is currently not being collected. Consideration should be given to collecting this data in relation to material aid, links with other services and the number of community training and education events conducted, to ensure these aspects of the program are actively monitored. While data is currently recorded in relation to timing and frequency of follow up phone calls on the IRIS system, this was not able to be extracted for the evaluation. Thought should be given to how this data can be best captured to ensure that it is regularly consulted and reflected upon.

It is vital that community organisations are able to use the data that is collected to inform program reflection and planning (including staffing and resourcing) easily and efficiently. Now that the Day Stay leadership has a better understanding of the administrative data that is collected, workers and leadership should be encouraged to regularly consult the data to monitor the service and observe relevant trends i.e. in relation to closure reasons and outcomes. To this end, it would be useful for the program manual to be updated to include definitions for each of the closure reasons and outcome codes. The current closure reasons and outcome code categories are broad and can be ambiguous in terms of their practical meaning in individual case circumstances. Establishing and documenting a consistent understanding of what circumstances these codes encompass will ensure that closure and outcome data is entered consistently, improving the reliability and useability of this data into the future.

The Day Stay family surveys currently administered are very comprehensive. It is of note that the surveys include the KPCS, a validated measure of parenting confidence, which is administered pre-service, mid-service and at follow up, to track improvements in parenting confidence over the course of the program. Given the stable improvements in KPCS scores over time that have been reported here, it may be sufficient to measure this only at the pre-service and follow up stage, excluding the mid-service time point. The KPCS questions in the mid-service survey could be replaced with alternative questions gathering participants' thoughts on the service and how the day was for them, for example, whether they felt heard and understood? And any other comments/feedback that would be valuable to capture in relation to families' immediate experiences on the day. Finally, consideration might be given to eliminating a small number of overlapping questions between the satisfaction survey and the follow up survey.



Overall, Day Stay's commitment to gathering families' feedback on the service is highly admirable. All feedback, the positives and any negatives, should be regularly shared with staff involved in delivery of the service to ensure a culture of reflective practice and ongoing improvement.

Summary of suggested actions:

- *Continue to access and discuss program data regularly to inform program planning and development*
- *Record data in relation to the following additional details by family (/referral number):*
 - *Number and type of material aid items given out*
 - *Number of referrals made to other services (specifying what services)*
 - *Number of training and education events attended*
- *Consider how best to record telephone contacts so that their timing and frequency can easily be reported on and monitored*
- *Maintain a record of the number of training and education events run*
- *Clarify and document what circumstances each of the case outcome and closure reasons codes cover*
- *Replace mid-service (end of day) survey Karitane questions with questions about families' immediate thoughts on the service and how the day was, i.e.:*
 - *What did you think of the service?*
 - *Did you feel heard and understood by staff?*
 - *Is there anything you would like more information about?*
 - *What could we have done better?*
 - *Consider seeking a rating out of 10 and reasons for that rating*
- *Consider overlap between satisfaction and follow up service survey – minimise number of questions asked*

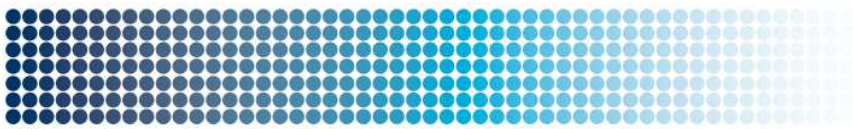
5. Conclusion

This evaluation has provided the opportunity to:

- clarify and document the Day Stay service model;
- consider how the service model aligns to the evidence and best practice;
- determine to what extent the program has been delivered as intended;
- consider to what extent progress has been made towards shorter and longer term outcomes;
- and
- explore the value of the service in the local community.

Findings indicate that the Day Stay service model is broadly supported by the literature regarding effective early parenting support. Developing relationships with parents is critical to the success of programs like Day Stay, as the practitioner-parent relationship is the medium through which such programs effect change. To this end, the warm welcome and orientation and parent/infant focused approach of the program are particularly important elements of Day Stay. Notwithstanding, further work is required to explicitly articulate and document how each of the Day Stay activities listed in the program logic are carried out. This would enable a more detailed review of how specific techniques used within the Day Stay activities align with the evidence and best practice.

The evaluation found that Day Stay has generally been delivered as intended. It is clear that staff are warm and welcoming to families and offer them substantial support, information and practical help on a wide range of topics relevant to their parenting capacity. There may be some scope to improve Day Stay session planning by making the planning process more explicit, ensuring planning is undertaken in partnership with families. This will ensure that the service addresses all issues that are most salient or of most interest to parents. It would also be beneficial for Day Stay staff to record additional

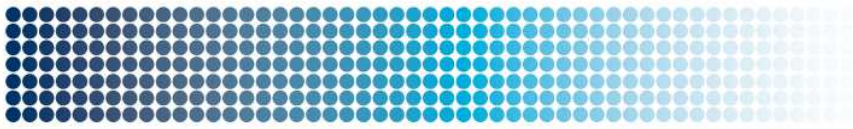


administrative data to ensure all aspects of the program are monitored (material aid, linkages to other services and the number of community training and education sessions conducted).

Analysis of data related to program impact clearly showed that there has been great progress made towards achieving Day Stay's intended outcomes. There is strong evidence that all immediate (short term) outcomes are being achieved, with further evidence of progress towards the longer term outcomes articulated in the program logic. In particular, there is very strong evidence that Day Stay has been effective to improve parenting confidence and has created significant changes for parents, children and their family units.

Feedback from families and stakeholders, supported by comments made by staff, indicated that Day Stay is held in very high regard in the local community. The service is appreciated for its extensive and practical content which addresses families' early parenting needs; its high quality; its accessibility; and the active role Day Stay staff play in driving and supporting change to improve the broader service system supporting young children and their families.

While the evaluation uncovered many positive findings about Day Stay, it has also raised some considerations for ongoing program improvement. These include clearer articulation and documentation of program detail; implementing a more explicit session planning process; strengthening feedback provided to referrers into the service; and further refining ongoing program monitoring and improvement processes. Action in the areas identified for improvement will serve to strengthen this highly respected and valued program, ensuring Day Stay continues to provide a best practice response to the needs of families and young children in the local community.



6. References

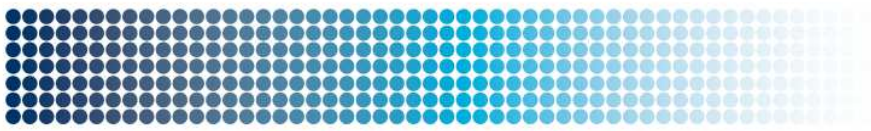
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7. Appendices

Appendix A: Updated Day Stay program logic

Appendix B: Day Stay evaluation framework

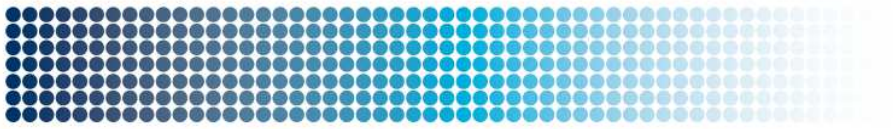
Appendix C: Family interview questions

Appendix D: Family satisfaction survey

Appendix E: Family service surveys

Appendix F: Staff focus group questions

Appendix G: Stakeholder interview questions



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