



**'THE WAY WE WERE'**  
**Reflections on changes to BROAD INSIGHT GROUP'S**  
**Early Childhood Intervention Services**

A summary from a presentation to an ECIA (Vic) Forum  
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*Since the BROAD INSIGHT GROUP (BIG) model of service delivery changed in 2001, many questions have been asked about our services by others in the ECI sector. These questions usually focus on "just what happened?" The whole story is a long one but this paper attempts to capture, ever so briefly, the major differences in past and present models of service delivery.*

**THE WAY WE SET UP SERVICES**

*Prior to 2001*, BIG conducted annual parent service evaluations, which routinely supported the way services were delivered. BIG's services were planned for each year with a focus on the specialist setting. Programs for children were dictated by a centre-based group framework. Family Centred practice was the catch call of our philosophy.

*Since 2001*, services have been re-developed and continue to be developed taking into consideration learnings from practice and research. The initial re-development of services could only have occurred after a comprehensive external evaluation and review. Out of this process came a commitment to an ecological framework wherein service delivery focuses on providing specialist support to any environment in which a child and / or family participates or wishes to participate. Our philosophy of Family Centred Practice was scrutinized. The concept of 'partnership' challenged staff to seek mutual understandings with families about purposes, agreed strategies, roles and responsibilities.

**THE WAY WE PARTNER**

*Prior to 2001*, Family Service Coordination (FSC) was the means by which services operated. It latched together a professional team, but the processes, in fact, reflected the professionals leading parents.

*Since 2001*, FSC is the basis of 'relationship based' services. The role of the FSC is given greater emphasis and is explored in detail. The BIG professional team is arranged around a family and child from their introduction to services, and other adults working with the child and family are considered part of the team, which the family leads.

## THE WAY WE ORGANISE SERVICES

*Prior to 2001*, services for children were planned for a year according to age-based groups located at the ECI centre. Services for children commenced within these groups immediately after introduction to BIG.

*Since 2001*, services are negotiated with families according to the individual needs and priorities for their children. This negotiation can only happen, when a relationship with a sense of common understanding is established. Services are flexible and are re-negotiated at regular intervals to match the changing needs of children and families. Specialist services are delivered across environments so as to support child and family participation.

## THE WAY WE DEVELOP CHILD PROGRAMS

*Prior to 2001*, child goals were set through a negotiated process with families. Goals often focused on child deficits and child development was often segmented into traditional developmental areas.

*Since 2001*, child goals are tailored to match family priorities within usual daily routines and activities. Goals are further matched to the priorities and the particular situations of other relevant adults in a child's life. Goals now focus on the child's participation in the most natural routines and activities, where, with whatever level of specialist support, natural opportunities for learning abound. Child development is considered in terms of participation in functional environments.

## THE WAY WE OFFER FAMILY SUPPORT

*Prior to 2001*, parent to parent support happened through regular contact at the ECI centre. Parents gained information through workers on an 'ad hoc' basis and Family Service Co-ordination provided some intensive support.

*Since 2001*, opportunities for parent support have been carefully considered. Parent to parent support opportunities are offered on an on-going basis from the time a family is introduced to services. Targeted information, education and support opportunities are planned regularly. Family Service Coordinators provide information and support and readily link families to appropriate services in the community.

## THE WAY WE POSITION OUR SERVICES

*Prior to 2001*, our specialist ECI services were central in a family's life. A child's inclusion in a community early childhood service was felt to be the responsibility of our specialist service. As specialists, we led the 'waltz'!

*Since 2001*, community early childhood services and other community facilities are now central in a family's life. A child's inclusion in a community early childhood service is based on a team solution focussed approach. The specialist support provided depends on the needs of the child and the needs and priorities of the adults involved in these environments. As specialists, we now dance the 'zorba', together with families and other community members!

By Leonie Symes

More information is available from  
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