

Children at greatest risk of long-term disadvantage – elements of successful programs and services

Intervention Points

- Transition points (for example from hospital to home, home to educational setting) provide excellent opportunities for intervention, as change is already occurring; and
- The earlier the intervention (before a behaviour becomes entrenched), the better.

Environment

- Conversationally rich;
- Stimulating;
- Non-threatening;
- Respectful; and
- Welcoming.

Setting

- Quality training for professionals and volunteers;
- Quality settings including low child-teacher ratios in educational settings; and
- Home visits help to engage those who may not take part in a more formal setting and engage people directly in the environment that may need to change.

Active involvement of the family

- Importance of parent-child interactions for positive outcomes;
- Support to participate is required;
- Focus on capacity and strengths;
- Families, with support, should be actively involved in problem solving and decision making about their circumstances; and
- Quality relationships and a partnership approach with facilitators/professionals essential.

Multi-layered and multifaceted

- Effective partnerships between organisations to provide integrated services;
- Single entry point to all services; and
- Providing a range of services to deal with differing needs.

Involvement of community

- Involving the community in development and delivery of programs can add a depth of understanding of resources and barriers to participation;
- Providing opportunities for parents to connect with others in the community; and
- Building on community strengths and capacity in the process.

Program

- Evidence based or have a strong evaluation component;
- Child and family focused;
- Flexible to be culturally aware and respond to individual needs;
- Build on strengths;
- Structured or formal topics are not always necessary, role modelling is effective;
- Delivered by highly skilled, committed professionals and volunteers;
- Long term – beginning during pregnancy and sustained; and
- Delivery in partnership with a widely recognised and respected organisation valuable.

Access

- The most disadvantaged may require practical assistance with: transport, cost, flexible opening hours, flexible settings (i.e. formal settings may be threatening), care for children;
- Some families may need additional support to be organised to participate. For sustained participation, they may also require support to develop resilience to be able to deal with things that happen out of the ordinary or setbacks.