

# **Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) Evaluation - Recommendations by ARTD, Government Response, Action and Timing**

## **AWARENESS AND REGISTRATION**

### **Recommendation: Information and Referral Pathways**

1. Establish more systematic and regular communications with diagnosticians and general practitioners through the professional colleges.

#### **Government Response**

Support

#### **Actions and Timing**

- 1.1. *Development proceeding* - Identified for action in the HCWA Communication Strategy and implementation initiated – mail out occurring to General Practitioners (GPs) in wide range of medical and health services.
- 1.2. *Ongoing* - Letter to diagnosticians to be sent out by September 2012.

### **Recommendations: Registrations**

2. Consider options to facilitate access for families in remote and particular regional areas that lack local diagnostic services.

#### **Government Response**

Support

#### **Actions and Timing**

- 2.1. *Development proceeding* – The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) is in discussion with stakeholders in the Northern Territory (NT), Tasmania and South Australia around rural and remote issues.
  - 2.2. *Ongoing* - The annual Autism Advisor Forums provide a regular opportunity to pursue this matter.
  - 2.3. *Development proceeding* - A number of Autism Associations have been provided with one-off funding for regional service delivery projects in 2012/2013 and will be required to report on outcomes and recommendations.
3. Develop translated culturally appropriate and plain English information resources at a Package level to facilitate access for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and Indigenous families. These could be made available through Autism Advisor Services and on the Raising Children Network (RCN) and FaHCSIA websites.

#### **Government Response**

Support

#### **Actions and Timing**

- 3.1. *Development proceeding* – An action in the HCWA Communication Strategy. Brochures for CALD communities have been developed and will be distributed to

GPs, and all HCWA partner organisations. Brochures will also be available on the FaHCSIA Website and partner websites.

**3.2. *Development proceeding*** - FaHCSIA is working with Autism Advisors to develop a unified approach to culturally appropriate resources and information.

4. Continue to support Advisor Services to develop relationships with CALD and Indigenous community organisations to facilitate access; lessons and strategies should be shared at a national level.

**Government Response**

Support

**Actions and Timing**

See 5.1

**4.1. *Ongoing*** - The March 2012 Autism Advisor Forum featured presentations on this issue and FaHCSIA has introduced regular teleconferences as part of a continuous improvement strategy to address this issue.

5. Develop options to ensure culturally appropriate service delivery and build trusting relationships between the Package and Indigenous communities, for example, establishing a national Indigenous Advisor position with the capacity to support and guide Advisor Services on work with Indigenous communities.

**Government Response**

Support

**Actions and Timing**

**5.1. *Development proceeding*** - FaHCSIA to fund a 2 year pilot project by Autism Queensland and other members of the Early Days Consortium of Autism Specialist Providers (EDCASP) to employ 2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Liaison Officers to work with all HCWA partner organisations. The positions will be identified as Indigenous.

6. If families agree, Advisor Services should record family income for registered clients, so FaHCSIA can monitor the degree of access for low income families.

**Government Response**

Support

**Actions and Timing**

**6.1. *Development proceeding*** - Capacity exists on current forms. Discussions to be held with Advisors about reasons for, and strategies to improve information collection.

## **EARLY INTERVENTION**

### **Recommendations: Service Access**

7. Monitor Package claims data, including wait times, as Better Start service delivery increases.

**Government Response**

Support

### **Actions and Timing**

**7.1. *Ongoing*** - Collection of data is ongoing. Department to explore further opportunities for analysing and using data.

8. Liaise with Health Workforce Australia (HWA) about options for developing allied health workforce capacity.

### **Government Response**

Support

### **Actions and Timing**

**8.1. *Development proceeding*** - Options to be explored by Department. Letter to HWA by September 2012.

9. Consider how the education and support components can be strengthened to help parents develop effective decision-making processes.

### **Government Response**

Support

### **Actions and Timing**

**9.1. *Ongoing*** - Department has developed a parent newsletter to provide information, and through the HCWA Communication Strategy is promoting the Raising Children website as source of information and support. The National Early Days Workshops Coordinator is developing new workshops material to include transition from HCWA to school.

10. Consider alternative delivery models in regional and remote areas. These may include tele-health approaches, funding providers for outreach, up-skilling local providers, enabling clients to group together to get services to travel to their region by providing data on demand.

### **Government Response**

Support

### **Actions and Timing**

**10.1. *Development proceeding*** - Department is encouraging and facilitating these approaches with current and potential service providers. Established internal Working Group (with Disability and Carers Programs Branch) and seeking advice from Better Start Initiative Expert Reference Group and Autism Advisors.

11. Allow relevant non-Panel professionals to approve resources for families in remote and regional areas that lack a local Panel provider. Professionals might include state services, those registered with relevant professional bodies, and education support staff.

### **Government Response**

Requires Further Consideration

### **Actions and Timing**

**11.1. *Requires further consideration*** - To be considered in context of work on increasing access generally to regional and remote areas/families.

12. Consider options to support Indigenous service access including consulting with Indigenous organisations about potential models, including delivery through Indigenous

organisations, and supporting partnerships between existing providers and Indigenous organisations.

**Government Response**

Support

**Actions and Timing**

- 12.1.** *Development proceeding* - Supporting and facilitating Indigenous access is an agenda item for the Autism Advisor Forum and actions are being explored and implemented within the HCWA Package. See **5.1**

**Recommendations: The Payment Model**

- 13.** Explore options to reduce administrative requirements for Panel providers and options to regulate administration fees or make providers display administrative charges on the Panel provider list on the FaHCSIA website.

**Government Response**

Support

**Actions and Timing**

- 13.1.** *Completed* - The Department has reviewed Early Intervention Operational Guidelines to clarify what can be included in fees charged for services and resources. Administrative requirements for applications and payments are being continuously improved. Reporting has been reduced from quarterly to six-monthly for service providers.
- 13.2.** *Development proceeding* – The Department is continually improving processes and is working on simplifying application forms and increasing consistency with Better Start processes and policy.

- 14.** Provide more information about the resources policy for Panel providers.

**Government Response**

Support

**Actions and Timing**

- 14.1.** *Completed* - Clarification has been provided in the reviewed Early Intervention Operational Guidelines published from 1 July 2012.

- 15.** Better inform families about the requirements for approval of resources through various Package information sources (e.g. Advisor Services and the Raising Children Network (RCN) website).

**Government Response**

Support

**Actions and Timing**

- 15.1.** *Completed* - Addressed in HCWA Communication Strategy through newsletters to service providers and families. Reviewed Early Intervention Operational Guidelines will be forwarded to Autism Advisors, Early Intervention Service Providers and RCN highlighting changes to resources section.

- 16.** Consider indexation of the funding over time to ensure it can buy a commensurate amount of services.

## **Government Response**

Not Supported

## **Actions and Timing**

- 16.1.** Consistent with the recommendations of the KPMG report on the effectiveness of early intervention, the Government is focused on a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) which would reform Early Intervention for children with disability nationally. The Productivity Commission report proposes a functional assessment model which would address these concerns.

## **Recommendations: Ensuring Quality and Best Practice**

- 17.** Establish a quality monitoring process. The first step should be to advertise the current complaints mechanism to ensure families are aware of how they can make complaints. This should include examples of practices requiring investigation.

## **Government Response**

Support in Principle

## **Actions and Timing**

- 17.1.** *Development proceeding* - The Department has a range of processes in place for monitoring service provision and handling complaints. A quality assurance framework specific to Early Intervention services is to be completed by September 2012 (see Additional Information).
- 18.** Review the Operational Guidelines to ensure they adequately cover family-centred practice and include assessment of family-centred practice as part of the quality monitoring process.

## **Government Response**

Support

## **Actions and Timing**

- 18.1.** *Completed* - The reviewed Early Intervention Operational Guidelines make clear that family centred practice is one of the central features of best practice. It will also be prioritised in the application (effective immediately) and the monitoring processes (ongoing).
- 19.** Establish a consistent policy on how coordination can be charged to families and have providers display these charges on the FaHCSIA website.

## **Government Response**

Support in Principle

## **Actions and Timing**

- 19.1.** *Development proceeding* - The Department is to explore options for how early intervention service providers can be recognised and compensated for the time that they take to collaborate with other providers.
- 20.** Explore alternative mechanisms for facilitating collaborative, multidisciplinary and trans-disciplinary practice. Options include developing information sharing systems, requiring case meetings, or facilitating networking. In considering options, the Package should draw on lessons from the practices in other multidisciplinary programs, for example, Chronic Disease Management, Better Access to Mental Health.

## **Government Response**

Support

### **Actions and Timing**

**20.1.** *Development proceeding* - The Department is exploring options. Case studies of best practice are provided in the Service Provider newsletter.

**21.** Educate families about the benefits of multidisciplinary practice through existing education and support mechanisms.

## **Government Response**

Support

### **Actions and Timing**

**21.1.** *Development proceeding* - The newsletter to families under development focuses on informing families of HCWA Package components and best practice including a multi-disciplinary and collaborative approach by service providers and will refer families to relevant sections of the Raising Children website.

## **EDUCATION AND SUPPORT**

### **Recommendation: Autism Advisors**

**22.** In consultation with Autism Advisor Services, consider options to expand the Advisor role to provide additional appointments/ support, the appropriate timing for these appointments, and the resource implications of

- a scheduled follow-up appointment/ contact
- an exit interview/ support with transition (for example, information on other available services).

## **Government Response**

Requires Further Consideration

### **Actions and Timing**

**22.1.** *Requires further development* - Ongoing discussions with Autism Advisors around role. A number of the short-term projects funded in 2012/2013 address professional development for Autism Advisors including support and transition of families. The Autism Association will be required to report on and share the outcomes and recommendations with FaHCSIA and other HCWA Providers.

### **Recommendations: Early Days Workshops**

**23.** Establish a way to provide information to families not able to attend a workshop.

## **Government Response**

Support

### **Actions and Timing**

**23.1.** *Completed* - Online workshops are available on the Raising Children website.

**23.2.** *Ongoing* - The National Early Days Workshops Coordinator is also providing flexible delivery of workshops for specific groups and individuals.

**24.** Have the Early Days Consortium of Autism Specialist Providers establish and maintain links with the DEEWR-funded Positive Partnerships providers to share strategies for

working with Indigenous, CALD and regional communities and ensure the two programs do not duplicate information resources. The Consortium should also connect with other relevant projects, including the Talking up Autism Project to draw on learning for working with Indigenous communities.

**Government Response**

Support

**Actions and Timing**

- 24.1.** *Ongoing* - The link between DEEWR and *Partnerships between Education and the Autism Community* (PEAC), the new consortium for Positive Partnerships, has been made by the National Coordinator of Early Days Workshops. Ongoing information sharing and collaboration is planned.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Liaison Officer positions will also assist on this issue as will the short-term projects being undertaken by the Autism Associations in QLD, SA, NT and WA that are focused on rural and remote service delivery.

- 25.** Monitor delivery under the new model to ensure strategies are working to achieve increased reach and efficiencies.

**Government Response**

Support

**Actions and Timing**

- 25.1.** *Ongoing* - FaHCSIA monitors service delivery regularly.

**Recommendations: Raising Children Network: Children with Autism pages**

- 26.** Ensure the Children with Autism pages provide up-to-date service information, including links to all relevant state-based services for children with autism.

**Government Response**

Support

**Actions and Timing**

- 26.1.** *Completed* - The Department has worked with the Raising Children Network (RCN) website providers to improve geocoding of autism services to allow families to locate local services.

- 26.2.** *Development proceeding* - A broader mapping of the service system across State and Territory and Australian government's is progressing. The joint project between FaHCSIA and the relevant departments of the South Australian government is a significant step in this objective (see **29.1**).

- 27.** Have the Children with Autism pages include a one-page system diagram that includes all Package components and state-based services.

**Government Response**

Support

**Actions and Timing**

- 27.1.** *Development proceeding* – FaHCSIA will pursue with the provider RCN.

### **Recommendation: PlayConnect Playgroups**

28. Consult with Playgroups Australia to identify an appropriate and feasible model for ensuring the sustainability of individual PlayConnect playgroups.

#### **Government Response**

Support

#### **Actions and Timing**

- 28.1. *Completed* – The new funding three year funding agreement between FaHCSIA and Playgroups Australia includes modifications to the model.

### **Recommendations: The Package as a Service Model**

29. In considering changes to the Package model, consider first what is available in the existing service system, including the variations across states and territories.

#### **Government Response**

Support in Principle

#### **Actions and Timing**

- 29.1. *Development proceeding* - No substantial changes planned for HCWA Package in immediate future. FaHCSIA has initiated a pilot project in SA about improving both the cooperation between state and federally funded services and the information available for families about the service system. The results of this pilot and the design of the NDIS may have implications for the HCWA Package.
30. Within funding constraints, and in consultation with relevant stakeholders, consider options for providing case coordination assistance for families that require it.
- 30.1. Expectations are that providers deliver within the scope of the existing Autism Advisor Service Operational Guidelines and funding. Discussions with state and territory governments and non-government providers may provide other options.
31. Establish a mechanism/s for cross-Package communication, sharing of resources and opportunities to form relationships. Communicate directly with all Panel provider organisations.

#### **Government Response**

Support

#### **Actions and Timing**

- 31.1. *Ongoing* - HCWA Communication Strategy identifies this need and actions to support it.
32. Establish communication links between FaHCSIA and relevant state and territory government departments at National Office level unless State Offices have existing connections with these departments in relation to autism. This should include a process for informing state and territory government departments about cases in which Package clients have been denied access to state-based services.



**Government Response**

Support in Principle

**Actions and Timing**

**32.1.** *Ongoing* - The Department's Early Intervention Helpdesk follows up cases as they arise. State and territory governments have criteria for services which are not influenced by the HCWA Package.

**33.** Monitor and report client data internally on an annual basis, and share trends and milestones with stakeholders through newsletters.

**Government Response**

Support

**Actions and Timing**

**33.1.** *Ongoing* - Monitoring is occurring. With development of HCWA newsletters this information is being/can be provided to service providers and families e.g. 500,000 services.

**34.** Monitor registration rates against estimated autism prevalence rates.

**Government Response**

Support

**Actions and Timing**

**34.1.** *Ongoing* - This is occurring.