



Discovering Babies Project

Well ...our Discovering Babies project is coming to a close, and what a fabulous response from the industry we had over the past 12 months.

If you recall, our project was to research specifically the care for babies within the industry and to determine what training is necessary to provide the skills to care for this age group. We did recognise that there are specific skills to care for very young babies and that services are finding more and more that babies are coming into care from as early as 8 weeks old. Our project aimed to look at what skills are needed and how can they be obtained within the parameters of the current training package. Also, what training needs to occur and by whom?



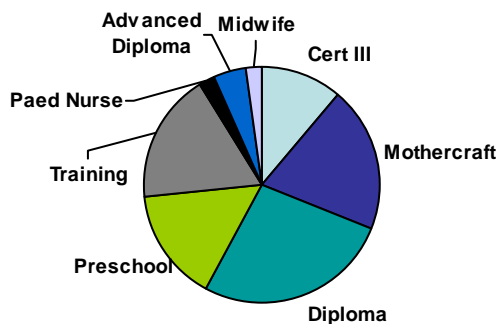
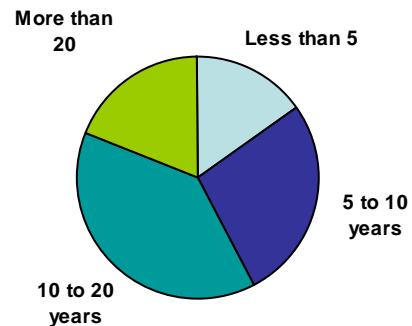
Pippa Bell, aged 4 years

What we do know and what has been confirmed by our project findings is that there are various types of skills, technical knowledge, practical skills, employability skills and skills we call 'soft' skills. The outcomes of this project that we anticipated was to identify a set of specific training strategies that will ensure that all skills, but particularly the 'soft' skills such as nurturing can be delivered and assessed as part of the training.

From the beginning.....we identified a range of participants from various age groups, with varying qualifications, from a cross section of children's services sectors, with varying years of experience with babies.

Of all respondents:

39% had between 10 and 20 years experience
19% had more than 20 years in the sector



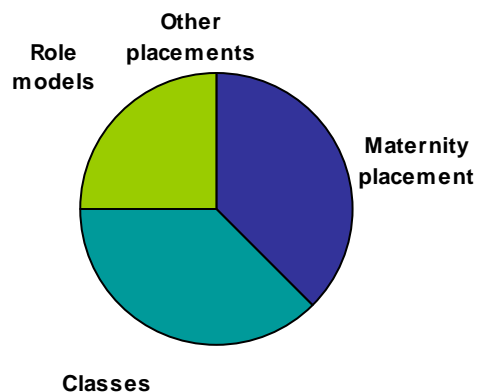
Of all respondents:

A large number were Mothercraft nurses, Trainers, and Diploma Qualified staff

How do you learn to work with babies?

The two key common answers for this question were:

- Working with experienced carers – 45%
- 80% of these were Diploma qualified
- Observing others – 24%
- 70% of these were specialists



A theme then started emerging around the need to work and observe with experienced staff – 57%

And a need for placements – 50%

Then.....we met with and interviewed a range of practitioners, from all sectors and groups and asked them some specific targeted questions such as:

- How do you learn to work with babies
- Who motivates you? What inspires you?
- What is mentoring and how is this achieved?

From this and other questions and conversations, we developed some lead questions to further explore.

Symposium Dinner

On the 21st August 2008 we held a hugely successful dinner symposium at the Amore Hotel in Richmond.

This dinner was attended by over 30 guests from a range of service types, industry areas and with varying qualifications and specialties. During the evening, we explored in more details some of the key findings of the surveys.

The group provided us with an abundance of information, some of which confirmed what we had expected in terms of the across the board lack of confidence from staff working with young babies and highlighted strongly some new information such as the opportunity to just observe skilled workers in practice.



Summary of the surveys and of the dinner Symposium

- 57% of respondents replied that workers need to be able to work with experienced carers in order to learn these skills
 - Outcome – we need more mentors and coaches.
- 50% replied that they felt a need for placements
 - Outcome – we need some sort of placement arrangement.
- 30% replied that they need time to observe others
 - Outcome – we need time to observe others through guided observation.
- 30% replied that they felt training should involve regular classes
 - Outcome – we need training in class or another form specifically for babies



So what do we do now?

From this information we were able to make some generalized assumptions.

After many months of confirming with participants and meetings internally with our team and a range of specialists we have made the following decisions:

1. There is a need to expand the skills and knowledge of the existing workforce.
 - Over the past 6 months we have provided 2 open workshop sessions run by SIDS & Kids. These sessions highlighted the requirements of staff working with babies, in particularly the sleeping arrangements and why this is so important.
 - All members of the Practical Outcomes team will be trained by SIDS & Kids as SIDS trainers.
2. There is a need to introduce external placement arrangements for all our Cert III and Diploma students. The arrangements will be different for both qualifications and include the following.
 - Certificate III in Children's Services
 - i. A 'Discovering Babies' project – this will involve the student shadowing a child and his/her family for the length of the Certificate III course.

This project will involve working with the family and child throughout the year and reporting on all areas of his/her development, progress etc

- Diploma of Children's Services

- i. A 'Discovering Babies' project – this will involve the student shadowing a child and his/her family throughout the year or for the length of the course. The student can continue with child selected during Cert III for a 2nd year or choose another child under 6 months to continue to study.
 - ii. We will be recommending that students will be allocated 10 hours of release time. This time will be used to release the student to attend specialist services as negotiated with the trainer, employer and student at the commencement of the course.
 - iii. An 'industry research project'. This will be included as a range of mini-assignments and will require the student to complete a range of observation (guided or solitary) tasks.
3. To re-write our training materials to include questions raised during the research process such as: when observing skilled practitioners – what do you notice, what are you looking for, how can you match theory to practice, what is the best method of observation (when you are working in the environment, or when you are purely an observer?)
 4. Identify further areas to explore and consult – such as mentoring programs, mentors undertaking TAA, impact of the new training package on the new skills.
 5. To include all of the above options in the new 08 training package and implement this from March 09 as opposed to waiting until 2010 for full implementation.

This newsletter is Part 1 of a 4 part series that will be developed over 2009 as we aim to inform you of our progress in implementing the ideas that you helped us create.

Please feel free to add your comments to our newsletters as we go to print (March, June, Sept and Oct). If you would like to be a part of our transition process, please let us know as we greatly welcome industry participation.

Thank you again for your participation in this valuable project and we look forward to working with you during 2009 as we prepare our industry for 'Babies'.



"Babies are such a lovely way of starting people"

Don Herald