

Minutes

Meeting of the SWMPF Working Group on Vulnerable and At Risk Children and Young People

**9:30am – 11:30am, Tuesday 2 September 2014
The Hive, City of Cockburn**

Interim chair: Karin Mac Arthur, Community Partnership Broker, South West Metropolitan Partnership Forum

Participants: Julie Fitzgerald (Team Leader, Responsible Parenting Services, Department for Child Protection and Family Support); Russ Eldean (Youth Liaison Officer, WA Police); Bobby Mizen (Youth Outreach Officer, City of Cockburn); Sarah Brown (Manager, Y-Shac Anglicare); Christine George (Youth Project Officer, City of Fremantle); Dee Skuza (Community Development Officer, Youth - City of Melville); Ian Jorritsma (Team Leader, Department of Housing); Claire Heffernan (Manager, Youth Justice Services); Ruth Dogovski (A/Youth Education Advisor, Youth Justice Services); Michael Carter (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Indigenous Network - Perth); Craig Green (Youth Worker, Fremantle PCYC); Katharine Ingram-Sheno (Consultant Behaviour and Attendance, Department of Education).

Apologies: Maria McAtackney (CEO Nyoongar Patrol Outreach Service)

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

2. Approval of minutes meeting 24 July 2014

The minutes were approved without change.

3. Update on actions arising from previous meeting

Karin thanked Christine for the suggestions she'd forwarded for possible new members to the group. These included Dismantle, which had applied to join the working group when the SWMPF was launched but hadn't been heard of since. Youth Place, another good suggestion, was in the working group originally but left when we scoped the project to target 8 – 13 year olds (as this is outside their remit). Christine, and others, had also suggested Relationships Australia. Karin proposed that given that that organisation works with all age groups, including but not limited to 8-13 year olds, it – and other organisations - might be invited to address the working group on specific issues, as required.

Karin has invited two dynamic individuals to join the group when they can. These are Mike Gilbert, Deputy Principal at Port Community School, and Janice Cuculoska, Deputy Principal at Atwell Primary School. Both are continually looking at new ways to engage with and support students. Since accepting her invitation, Janice has advised she has been appointed to the acting Principal position at Medina PS so, while she is keen to support this project, realistically she will be very stretched to do so.

It was agreed that the group is currently heavily government-based and needs more non-government members. The group discussed possibly inviting Head Space, Wanslea and Mercy Reconnect. Karin to follow up.

It was recalled that the 8 – 13 year age group was chosen precisely because there are limited services available for that specific cohort; the group's membership would necessarily reflect this.

Actions:

- Karin to follow up with suggested non-government agencies to invite them to join the working group.
- Working Group members to identify 'go getters', dynamos and ideas generators who work with 8 to 13 year olds who might also be invited to join the working group.

Outstanding actions from previous meeting

- Katharine to email Department of Education contacts to Karin.
- Christine to follow up re Swan Alliance project presented at YACWA conference.

4. Debrief on meetings with school principals

Karin thanked all the members who had joined her at the meetings with the Principals of the three primary schools.

All three meetings were successful, with each Principal accepting our invitation to participate in the project.

It was noted that each school had different priorities and it would be important therefore to tailor initiatives to each school, while adopting the same overall approach to all three.

While the project initiatives would be informed by the students themselves, the group agreed that it was important to try to continue successful programs that the different schools had implemented but had been forced to cut for financial reasons. Similarly, the group was keen to implement successful initiatives from other schools (in Australia and elsewhere) as part of this project.

Since agreeing to participate in the project, all schools had each identified approximately 20 students whom they believed would benefit from the project. Karin had distributed the lists of students (unnamed) to the working group together with initial background information about each to all working group members before the meeting.

The data from the schools indicated that when the students are at school their behaviour is a key issue. It was agreed that more information was needed to identify each student's "passion point", what is preventing them from coming to school, where they are when they are not at school, and what they are doing. It was also raised that students need to be taught that different behaviours are acceptable in different contexts and what might be acceptable at home may not be at school.

The data also indicated that lateness is an issue. The group therefore needs to look at both family and school, and identify what needs to change to make school a positive

experience. Cognitive issues and barriers to learning were also discussed. It was emphasised that a sense of accomplishment was important for all students.

5. Development of initial action plan and engagement strategy

All the SWMPF projects are being driven from the “bottom up”. The three groups of students will therefore be encouraged to design the project and drive the way forward. This needs to be done through the schools and with parental consent.

It was suggested that a broad action plan be developed for all three schools and then three small groups established to work directly with each school and identify specific actions.

It was agreed that it was necessary in the first instance to get a clearer picture of each student. It was proposed that all members draft questions and test these on young people before trialling them with the students in the project. Examples included long term goals, barriers to attendance and activities they had never tried but were interested in.

Contact with parents was discussed and it was felt that all options should be explored including phone calls, consent forms and home visits. Advice should be sought from the schools in this regard.

It was agreed that the group also needed a picture of the students’ family background in order to identify appropriate ways to build resilience and identify the barriers to attendance. Privacy and information sharing concerns would need to be raised with the school.

The following members would work directly with the schools (together with Karin):

- Winterfold PS – Christine, Julie and Catherine
- South Lake PS – Bobby, Ruth and Maria
- Caralee CS – Dee, Denise plus one other TBA.

Actions:

- Working group members to email proposed questions for students to Karin by Friday 12 September.
- Craig to test the questions on his students at the PCYC this week.
- Karin to contact each school to set up meetings to discuss proposed next steps, including draft questions.
- Small groups to meet with their nominated schools.
- Karin to investigate information sharing protocols to ensure compliance with privacy legislation at all stages of this project.

6. Strategy regarding transition year students

While the original intention of this project had been to track the year 6 and 7 students for the next two years, it was agreed that it would not be possible to do so, within the existing resources of the group. Further, that three months’ involvement of these students in the project was not sufficient to provide useful data.

It was noted that 50 per cent of the identified students were in Years 4 and 5; the group agreed that it would follow these students through the transition period.

7. Project measurement indicators

The group agreed the following four indicators to assist in measuring the project:

- Increase in school attendance (quantitative)
- Increased engagement in local out-of-school activities (quantitative)
- Children and young people report increased sense of resilience and well-being (qualitative)
- Children and young people report increased sense of safety and support in their community (qualitative)

While student behaviour was raised as a potential indicator, the group agreed that measuring behaviour comparatively between the three schools and potential secondary schools would be problematic.

8. Membership of the working group

Refer item 3.

9. Commonwealth Government Indigenous Advancement Strategy – possible funding opportunity

This funding is for Indigenous-specific programs only. For that reason, Michael advised that this project would not be eligible for funding as many of the identified students were not Aboriginal.

Michael provided the application forms to all the group members who might be interested in applying on behalf of their individual organisations. It was noted that the application period is open only for four weeks.

10. Volunteer to take minutes at next meeting

Karin would seek volunteers out-of-session.

11. Date and venue of next meeting

The next meeting will be held from 9:30am – 11:30am on Thursday 18 September in a venue to be confirmed by the City of Fremantle. Karin will be in touch to find a volunteer to take minutes at the next meeting.

12. Any other business

- Karin regretted she had not yet had the opportunity to draft the group's Terms of Reference. This was a priority and would be done asap.
- Many thanks to Katharine for taking the minutes and to Cockburn Youth Service for hosting us!