DRUMMOND STREET SERVICE'S PARENTING FRAMEWORK
(Parenting Education and Support Team)

Current members of the parenting education and support team include:

- Helen Rimington (Manager, content developer and group facilitator), 5 days p/w
- Sue Kerchhoff (Parent Support Worker, content developer and facilitator), 2 days p/w
- Sylvia Cseh, Kate Galea, Amanda Marsh (HOPE Hands On Parenting Education workers) varies
- Ewinia Huang (Group facilitator) 2 days p/w Collingwood Hub

This document provides an overview of the approach to parenting education and support we take at *drummond street services*. Of course each practitioner has their unique style and expertise, but we follow a general parenting philosophy which is reflected in this framework.

We start with an assumption that almost all parents are doing the best job they can, given their unique circumstances. It's a privilege to work with families and this relationship demands a high degree of trust, that we respect at all times. We balance this with a commitment to child safety and wellbing.

Our Theoretical Framework
All programs at *drummond street services* are based on these frameworks.

Public Health Framework/Prevention and Early Intervention

In our efforts to promote good mental health outcomes for children throughout the population, we utilise a variety of interventions, including:

- Universal promotion of positive parenting, (not just for at risk groups)
- Targeted prevention and early intervention parenting support for families at risk, and
- Intensive family support where children are displaying symptoms of mental illness.

At *drummond street services* we focus most of our resources on prevention and early intervention as we help families move through key transition points where needs may emerge as things change.

Whole of Family Focus

In all our parenting work, the focus is on the well-being of the family as a whole, as we know that family-level risk and protective factors have the largest and earliest influence on later mental health outcomes for children. Even when we work with individuals, we do so with an eye on their family context.

Our work with families focuses on the following six whole of family well-being domains, (with a focus on parenting competence), as all domains impact on the capacity to parent effectively. These are the domains our Centre for Family Research and Evaluation (CFRE) team measure:

1. **Individual Well-being of Parents and Children** (physical health, mental health, development & learning)
2. **Connected Family Relationships** (intimate couple, (step)parent-child and sibling relationships)
3. **Safe Family Environment** (free from /reduced risk of neglect, violence, abuse)
4. **Competent Parenting** (confident, age-appropriate parenting)
5. **Material Security** (housing, financial)
6. **Connection to Community** (family, friends, professional supports, schools and other community organisations and activities)

(see Appendix 1 for parenting focus under each domain)

Inclusive & sensitive approach

We recognise that families take many forms, including same-sex parented families, transgendered parents, step-families, sole parent-families and multi-generational families and we work to ensure that our programs and services are inclusive and respectful of these differences.

drummond street believes in **starting where parents are at.**
- We try to work with all parents (and carers), understanding that many are under significant stress
- We start from their current situation and work with them so they can be "good enough"* parents
- We develop practical self-help strategies collaboratively
- We understand that not all parents know how to connect well with their children

- We aim to raise awareness of the significance of parents' interactions with their children
- We endeavour to avoid judgement and stigma, while maintaining our commitment to child safety
- We know parenting isn't black and white, so our approach is flexible, while also following evidence based approaches
- We offer education and options to support positive family functioning.

Parenting principles

Our parenting interventions at *drummond street services* seek to promote parenting that develops secure attachment, is authoritative, and is emotionally available. We avoid having strict lists of Do's and Don'ts. We realise parenting isn't an exact science. At *drummond street services* children are not seen as manipulators who need to be controlled, we promote the understanding of developmental stages and looking for meaning behind behaviour. We also work with parents on practical tools and strategies for managing challenging times with children. We do follow the evidence based approaches but also allow flexibility.

Principles
- Strengths-based approach
- Readiness to identify and act when children are at risk
- Evidence-informed practice i.e. Develop programs based on a theory of change with measurable outcomes
- Assertive engagement where necessary- Outreach to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and the broader community
- Trauma-informed practice (emphasises physical, psychological, and emotional safety and creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control)
- Working across the family life cycle at key transition points
- Culturally-sensitive and Gender-sensitive practices
- Good Enough Parenting*

Aims
- To prioritise child safety and mental health
- To build parenting competencies and confidence
- To decrease risk factors for poor child mental health outcomes and increase protective factors
- To promote authoritative, attachment and emotion-focused parenting practices
- To provide support throughout the life-course with particular attention to family transitions

- To wrap programs around people i.e. we customise and adjust support offerings to family needs in order to make access and engagement easier
- To contribute to the evidence-base around effective parenting interventions
- To develop programs for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups such as CaLD, Queer community, Aboriginal, Sole Parents and those who have experienced trauma
- To improve parental support networks.

WHAT WE OFFER

Brief Interventions defined

- Up to six sessions (with 1:1 with Parenting Support Worker)
- Assessment of needs
- Case plan/Family Action Plan (may include participation in seminars/groups)
- HOPE program, practical parenting skills and support, mostly outreach
- *drummond street service's* CALL ME program (new brief intervention, phone based parent coaching -under development)

Intensive Family Support

- Up to 12 months (Whole-of-Family) interventions can come under Parenting Support
- Whole-of-Family assessments
- Family Action Plan (may include participation in seminars/groups)
- Includes case-work component/counselling/parenting

Universal Interventions (Seminars)

- Transition to Parenthood sessions with new parents (often at Maternal Child Health Centres) lead into Ready Steady Family workshops (family violence prevention);
- Parenting children who worry;
- Managing behaviour in under 5s (discussion group that acts as conduit to other services)
- Top Gear- Parenting kids with challenging behaviours;
- Parenting Toddlers (Tantrums and Tiaras);
- Our transition sessions- Starting Primary School and Starting Secondary School;
- Parenting Adolescents (currently under review);

Early Intervention and Targeted/ Brief Interventions (Groups)

- Ready Steady Family workshop for new parents
- Parenting children who worry;
- Top Gear Parenting kids with challenging behaviours

- Parenting post-separation; (under review)
- Parenting as a same sex couple; (under development)
- Parenting Teens (with a mental health focus- often run with headspace);
- Relationship Renovation (couples course that also sits under PEAS team)
- HEARTS Parenting Group (3 sessions run at pre-school level in Playgroup environments)

Evidence based group programs delivered at *drummond street,* but developed elsewhere include:

- Bringing Up Great Kids; Brain development and meaning of child's behaviour 6-8 sessions
- Tuning into Kids. Emotionally Intelligent Parenting (1-18 years) 6-8 sessions
- Circle of Security. Building attachment and connections (1-5 years) 7-8 sessions

We also work with *Stepfamilies Australia* to support their delivery of family and parenting programs. Stepping Up, Step-Parenting (course materials currently under review);

Future Groups we hope to develop

- Prime Time (a general "best of" parenting program for those with primary school ages children)
- Reconnecting Dads and Kids

The CFRE Team (Centre for Family Research and Evaluation) at *drummond street* work closely with the Parenting Team to ensure measures for groups are appropriate and to build evidence base for the future.

Appendix 1

DOMAINS OF FAMILY WELL-BEING AS THEY RELATE TO PARENTING
(Linked to all *drummond street services* programs)

The parenting education and support work provided by *drummond street services* aims to support and encourage the following:

1. Individual Well-being

Take care of each parent's physical, emotional and social needs;
Take care of each child's physical, emotional, social and learning needs;
Develop children's interpersonal, problem-solving and emotion regulation skills;
Healthy nutrition and lifestyles.

2. Connected Family Relationships

Strengthen attachment between parents and children;
Make time for parents to connect;
Strengthen family communication skills – reflective listening, problem-solving, decision-making
Schedule family time together.

3. Safe Family Environment

Strengthen respectful relationship between parents;
Use of assertive parenting rather than aggression/punishment/shaming;
Strengthen family conflict-resolution and decision-making strategies;
Build children's, women's and men's support networks and help-seeking skills;

4. Competent Parenting

Spend time with children/in children's activities/playing/reading together
Establish routine and structure, especially around meals and sleep
Enhance knowledge about age-appropriate development and mental health literacy
Support parents to talk with children about feelings (their own and the children's)

Encourage parents to listen to children – aim for understanding not control
Encourage parents to role model appropriate behaviour and emotional control
Assist in the formation of secure attachments with children
Articulate clear expectations for behaviour, assist with strategies to manage poor behaviour, boundary-setting.

5. Material Security

Support families with financial and housing needs where impacting on capacity to parent.

6. Connection to Community

Establish and strengthen family supports (extended family, friends, MCHNs, new parents' groups, playgroups, child-care/early childhood education, schools);
Peer groups supports.

A NOTE ON GOOD ENOUGH PARENTING:

People may at times assume "good enough parenting" means just passable, or mediocre….. Not great, but not harmful. It is a phrase coined by Winnicott. He originally meant to provide support for what he called "the sound instincts of normal parents." It was his extension of his championship of the "ordinary good mother...the devoted mother". The idea of the good enough parent was designed on the one hand to defend the ordinary mother and father against what Winnicott saw as the growing threat of intrusion into the family from professional expertise; and on the other to offset the dangers of idealisation built into articulations of the 'good mother or father'

It's particularly interesting in that when we consider the normal challenges of parenting teenagers, a key function of the idea of good enough parenting was to provide the essential background to allow for the growing child's disillusionment with the parents and the world. In other words children grow to realise their own parents are not perfect, the world can be unfair and they are not as powerful as they may have believed. Winnicott believed that by surviving the child's anger and frustration with the necessary disillusionments of life, the good enough parents would thereby enable them to relate to them on an ongoing and more realistic basis and foster continuing emotional growth.