

Second Report to Cognition Education Trust December 2022

Agreed impact assessment

Success-within the 3-year timeframe

- Outcomes for disadvantaged children will be improved including parents/caregivers reading, talking and engaging more and better with their children
- Parents/caregivers know more about the benefits of reading with their children and model serve and return
- 5000 families/whānau will receive books, information and other resources
- Strengthened collaboration and co-design with partner agencies and community organisations, in particular NZ Corrections, to deliver books, resources and other support to children of parents in the care of Corrections in South Auckland and Northland.

Progress to Date

COVID Impact

The COVID pandemic has continued to affect our services, including impacting on our partner providers and particularly affecting staff numbers and limiting access to the homes of the families we most want to service.

There is hope, however, as providers report a return to near normality.

To overcome the barriers that the impact of COVID created, we developed some new and alternative programme processes. The most significant changes have been:

1. The development of “tamariki carepacks” that contain key messages, books, games and activities as well as scrapbooks, crayons, chalks, etc, that are personally delivered by Police or Corrections staff, directly to families in South Auckland and Northland. This carepack project will deliver 1000 packs to the most vulnerable children in the region by 30 June 2023, of which, at the time of writing, we have delivered 700.

To ensure that we can deliver books in “home and heart languages” we have developed a relationship with the National Library and Ministry of Education. The Ministry has provided funding to enable us to purchase the more expensive books in te reo, bilingual books and other books appropriate for Māori and Pasifika, whānau. These titles are generally out of reach for us as they are published in smaller numbers and are therefore more expensive. We have, however, developed a relationship with Rakau Press that publish books in te reo and bilingual titles and are working on a book that may become one of our own publications and within our budget. We also have a relationship with Gecko Press and Massey University and have purchased bi-lingual books from these providers.

2. The development of an extension to our Taonga mō ngā Tamariki programme to include, in addition to whānau in the care of Corrections, whānau that are impacted in some way by sentenced whānau or are identified and referred to us by Police, Oranga Tamariki or other community agencies. We are particularly concerned for children that have been impacted by a Family Harm incident.

Taonga mō ngā Tamariki (TMNT) is based on the programme Reading Together, delivered into schools; and Early Reading Together, designed to be delivered to parents of children in their early years (including the First 1000 Days). TMNT has been developed in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, the Biddulph Group and the Department of Corrections and adapted in accordance with evaluation and regular feedback from participants and Corrections staff.

Seamless services for Children

As our programmes have evolved, including as a result of evaluation and discussions with parents and providers, we have recognized that the three-tier approach of antenatal, Books for Babies and “toddlers” is confusing for some providers and some parents. In addition, as each programme requires enrolment and evaluation, these programmes have required much, largely unnecessary, form filling. We are working with providers to create a more seamless service in which a family can, if desired, participate with us from pre-birth to 3 years of age (or older in some cases).

To support this, we have developed digital enrolment and are rolling this out gradually as providers return to more normal service delivery. Not only does this make enrolment easier for both providers and whānau, but it also reduces our staff time so that staff can get on with work that improves outcomes for whānau. Digital enrolment commences in South Auckland in early 2023.

Staffing

Earlier this year we appointed Dr Jo Kayes, a medical doctor, to the role of Service Coordinator. Jo has been amazing and added significant value to the team. Unfortunately, this has meant that Jo has spent less time with her young family and she has therefore reduced her hours and we have appointed Vicki te Wano as the new Service Coordinator. Jo remains an important member of our staff.

Child-Centred Visiting

In our work with incarcerated parents, we have recognized the impact on the children, the innocent victims of crime. We also know from research that close relationships between incarcerated parents and child (and wider whānau) reduces recidivism. Corrections also recognize these factors (and the cost benefits).

There is a plethora of evidence to support the positive impact of child-centred visiting (CCV) in prisons. A recent evaluation of our Taonga mō ngā Tamariki programme recommended that Corrections consider this a priority and recognize the positive impact on recidivism.

We have worked with Corrections and Ministry of Education to advance discussions at a senior management level within Corrections and have commenced CCV trials at two prisons including Northern Region Corrections Facility in Kaikohe. Discussions are also well underway to establish CCV at Auckland Women’s (ARWCF) at Wiri, and a trial is scheduled for January 2023 (subject to staffing and COVID impacts).

The pilot run at NRCF was extremely successful and a special Christmas CCV is planned for December to which Minister Davis has been invited.

GOGO Books

It has been a vision for some time to develop a social enterprise that could sell books to the general public. GOGO Books (Get One Give One) is based on the Eat my Lunch concept where one purchases a book, and the profits provide a book for one of our families. This concept is in its early stages of development.

Cultural Awareness

We are very much aware of our obligations to Te Tiriti and that we work closely with Māori. While we do employ Māori staff we are a mainstream organization. It is important therefore that we work closely with iwi and that we strive to deliver programmes, and in a way that benefits all of our programme participants.

Board and staff have undertaken cultural competency training with Core Education. As part of this we have developed a “why statement”

“At Storytime, we are committed to honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi. By connecting with our partners and whānau in authentic, culturally responsive and mana-enhancing ways we can support whānau to thrive”.

Business as Usual

Of course, much of the day-to-day work with families continues, albeit affected by COVID restrictions and we are in regular communication with our partner providers to get books, key messages and other resources into the homes of the most vulnerable whānau in South Auckland and Northland.

Conclusion

We are pleased to report that:

1. Outcomes for disadvantaged children continue to be improved, regardless of COVID and we work to ensure that parents/caregivers are reading, talking and engaging more and better with their children
2. Because we have still been able to work with our partner providers and because we have developed alternative service delivery methods, we know that parents/caregivers know more about the benefits of reading with their children and model serve and return. We also have an evaluation underway by Point and Associates that will support this including interviews with whānau
3. Regardless of COVID we are still confident that we will reach 5000 families as a result of this project. We are approaching each individual provider to encourage increasing enrolments and to move to the new digital platform
4. Our collaborative approach and a need to think outside the square due to COVID, has in fact strengthened our work with partner agencies and community organisations. We have, in particular, come to work very closely with NZ Corrections and Ministry of Education, to deliver books, resources and other support to children of parents in the care of Corrections in South

Auckland and Northland

5. With the input from our partner agencies and the evaluators we have co-designed services and now continue to build on that work to ensure that the most effective programmes are delivered to the most disadvantaged families in South Auckland and Northland.

Tony Culliney

29 November 2022