The influence of community on children’s outcomes

Dr Sharon Goldfeld
Making a local community impact for children
July 2011

The task is not so much to see what no-one else has yet seen. It’s to think what no-one has yet thought of, about that which everyone has seen

Arthur Schopenhauer 1788-1860

Overview

1. What do we know about community level influence?
2. Community effects and child development: creating a conceptual model
3. The challenge of identifying and measuring community level factors
4. Creating service system level change

1. What do we know about the influence of community on children’s outcomes?

‘If numerous and seemingly disparate outcomes are linked together empirically across neighbourhoods and are predicted by similar structural characteristics, there may be common underlying causes’

Sampson et al. 2002, p. 447

Neighbourhood effects research: location matters

Disadvantaged communities:

- There is significant social inequality among neighbourhoods.
- Social and health problems tend to cluster together and can include crime, adolescent delinquency, social and physical disorder, low birth weight, infant mortality, school dropout, and child maltreatment.
- There are neighbourhood predictors common to many children and adolescent outcomes e.g. concentration of poverty, single-parent families and rates of home ownership, length of tenure.
- The concentration of poverty has increased in the last few decades as well as the concentration of affluence at the higher end of the income scale.

(Sampson et al. 2002)
Strong communities derive from:

- The economic/natural/human/social capital assets of a community
- The knowledge within the community that allows for the sustainable use of assets
- The ability to collectively organise in order to work through issues, set priorities, and use resources to their full capacity
- Local institutions that provide governance structures through which collective action can be organised


2. Community effects and child development: creating a conceptual model

Community strengthening interventions drive a wedge in the cycle of disadvantage

- Tony Vinson, Community Adversity and Resilience, 2004

Ecological way of thinking

Epidemiological grunt
Analyses at the environmental level are usually criticized for being subject to the ecological fallacy: i.e., it is incorrectly assumed that correlations that apply to groups will apply to individual risk.

Perhaps we should turn this argument around and argue that analyses of individual risks may be subject to the atomistic fallacy: i.e., analyses at the individual level may be inappropriate if we are seeking to determine the social environmental causes of illness.

The Australian Early Development Index

- The AEDI is an Australian adaptation of the Canadian Early Development Instrument (EDI) developed through the Australian Early Development Index: Building Better Communities for Children project (2004-2006).
- It is a teacher completed checklist which measures five areas of child development: physical health, emotional maturity, language, communication skills and general knowledge.
- It is an index of the outcomes of early child development and of children’s ability to take advantage of the learning environments offered to them by schooling.

Data availability: AEDI

The Kids in Communities Study (KICS)

Measuring community level effects on children’s developmental outcomes.
Measuring community level factors that may be influencing children’s development in 5 key domains or environments:

- **Social capital environment**
- **Service environment**
- **Governance environment**
- **Physical environment**
- **Socio-demographic environment**

3. Identifying and measuring community level factors

“Off diagonal” communities - exceptions to the rule: learning from the extremes

(healthy deprived areas: RESIliENT & unhealthy wealthy areas: AT RISK)
Measures summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Sub domain elements</th>
<th>Measures and methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross-Domains</td>
<td>Service, Social, Physical and Governance domains</td>
<td>Service and Governance domains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Quantity</td>
<td>Service count per capita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Mobility, number of young children in an area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Qualitative data</td>
<td>Community survey, focus groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Services and Public Transport accessibility</td>
<td>GIS (mapping)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical quality of a neighbourhood</td>
<td>Neighbourhood Observation Tool (developed by PI Ford)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Walkability at the small area level</td>
<td>Walk and Safety tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Walkability at the suburb area level</td>
<td>Walk Score© application/ tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Classification of governance structures</td>
<td>Key policy analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>Specific area level SES variables e.g. education, occupation, income</td>
<td>Geographic matching and correlations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Methodologies overview

Key methodologies tested:
- Household surveys
- Neighbourhood observations
- Geospatial mapping
- Stakeholder interviews
- Parent focus groups
- Grey literature analysis
- Governance observations
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How to find the levers for change?

Government levers: system change

Economic and Social Incentives

Physical and Social Planning

Law and Regulation

Children and young people are provided the best possible start in life and families and communities are given the help they need to achieve this.

Funding and Delivery of Services

Children and young people are provided the best possible start in life and families and communities are given the help they need to achieve this.

Funding and Delivery of Services


Creating system change for services

Economic and Social Incentives

Physical and Social Planning

Law and Regulation

Children and young people are provided the best possible start in life and families and communities are given the help they need to achieve this.

Funding and Delivery of Services

‘Nothing hard is ever easy’

Don Berwick - 1998

Developmental health opportunity
Blue Sky Project

Shifting Children’s Developmental Trajectory

A joint project by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Melton Shire Council and the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Megan Leuenberger
Health and Wellbeing Division
DEECD
**Project Aims**

To develop and test a transformed service delivery system that is better able to shift the developmental trajectory of children 0-8 years of age in Victoria.

**Questions:**
- What are the gaps, for current service providers and families, in the selected geographical area (Melton South) in terms of access and quality of service delivery?
- What could an integrated approach to service delivery look like?

**Methodology**

**Optimal developmental trajectory of children aged 0 to 8 years**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Services are family led and child centred</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children experience a seamless journey &amp; responsive to needs.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children are ready for school and school is ready for them.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents and family are supported</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**5 key supporting strands**

- Communication strategy
  - Information sharing
  - Roles and responsibility
  - Information systems

- Stronger Service partnerships
  - Access
  - Referral guidelines
  - Service knowledge and availability

- Family and service coordination
  - Elimination of service gaps and duplication
  - Interface concerns
  - Case coordination
  - Central intake

- Specific system and processes that need to occur
  - Shared policy framework
  - Collective accountability
  - Education to staff on overall system
  - Service providers education

- Quality
  - Family centred practice
  - Customer service

**BLUE SKY PROJECT: A systems approach**

- Project Initiation
- Investigative & consultative
- Model Design
- Development
- Implementation plan

**Solutions Development**

**Strategies to implement the revised service system**

- Increased knowledge of child development and behaviour
- Parents gain increased knowledge of child development and behaviour
- Parents are connected to services and the community
- Children with additional needs make smooth transitions to school and flourish there
- Children are ready for school and school is ready for them
- Children experience a seamless journey & responsive to needs.
Innovative Strategies
1. Development of a Child and Family Information and Assessment centre. The centre could have a large virtual component and include soft entry points for families.
2. Family assessment to be completed at one centre to avoid multiple assessments for the child.
3. Development of a Child Service to collect client information, communication, advice and service delivery.
4. Establishment of a 800 number to act as a ‘free-call’ source of information for services for 0-8yr olds.
5. A family and electronic record management system.
6. A collaborative data collection across health, education and welfare services providing progress reports and key performance indicators.
7. Improve public transport to allow families to access services.

Services
1. Establish the external education classes in line with flexible models of learning— including as a high priority, the importance of initiating breastfeeding.
2. Establish EFT for childcare and daycare for all children under 5 or 7 day.
3. The distinction between childcare and kindergarten is removed. Remove barriers for families accessing kindergarten.
4. Develop outreach services for vulnerable families at the local government level (a shared responsibility between service providers).
5. Children in Out of Home care requiring health development assessment are to be prioritised.
6. An international centre for Inclusive Health is to be renewed to become more accessible and timely for families.

Integrated Governance
1. An agreement by organizations involved in utilizing the revised service system is required.
2. Planning for partnership agreements: at all levels (government is required for system implementation.
3. Planning of resources; for example: office, staffing, equipment and communication pathway.
4. Collaboration data collection across health, education and welfare services; providing progress reports, monitoring and assessing system performance.

Building Capacity
1. Change management processes to be continued for all staff across services to work with the proposed new system model.
2. Consider revised staffing EFT allocation for services to implement the system changes.
3. Aligned and effective processes for all services to be developed for the proposed new service system.
4. Revised Child Health nursing and Community Health service to work together to develop guidelines and pathways to assist direct referrals between each other.
5. Developed a streamlined service pathway for services involving referral processes.
6. Service coordination processes to assist family access to services needs to be developed with the community service providers.

Knowledge Sharing
1. Professional development coordination to improve collaboration and coordination of workers to share knowledge.
2. Roles and responsibility for assistant workers to know who is doing what in the community.
3. Education updates for all services on the operation of the proposed new service model.
4. Networking meetings for all service providers to meet and share experiences and knowledge.

Others are thinking the same way........
Conditions for success

Common agenda:
- collective impact requires a shared vision for change and problem solving

Shared information system:
- a short list of indicators across the community organizational efforts are aligned.

Continuous communication:
- establishing trust between not for profit, governmental and corporations is challenging but very important
- Regular meeting at all level is important

Support governance:
- Project group to continue on with the initiatives – project manager, data manager and facilitator
Creating change....

Prochaska, DiClemente and Norcross (1992)

I would not give a fig for the simplicity this side of complexity, but I would give my life for the simplicity on the other side of complexity.

Oliver Wendell Holmes
(US Supreme Court judge)

Adoption & Implementation Challenge
- Motivate core group
- Acceptance of change
- Facilitate adoption
- Implementation of effective services
- Evaluate outcomes

Rogers and Schumaker, 1971

Innovators Early Adopters Early Majority Late Majority Laggards
2.5% 13.5% 34% 34% 16%

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