



Final newsletter

In this final newsletter for right@home, we want to thank all 722 families who have been part of the right@home project. Ten years after the project began, all the project visits and phone calls are complete! This newsletter describes what the right@home families and project team have achieved together. It gives an overview of the program, what families said about the experience, and what comes next.

Celebrating achievements big and small

- right@home has been running for almost 10 years. That is over **3,285 days!**
- Over this time, the children in right@home have grown from babies to big school kids.
- right@home children have now all started primary school, with the oldest in grade 3.
- All families shared the pandemic experience, with many doing home schooling with their kids.

right@home nurse-home visiting program

In Australia, all families can visit the free Child and Family Health service (known as Maternal and Child Health in Victoria) from the time their babies are born until they start school. The number of scheduled visits is different in each Australian state and territory. In 2013, when right@home began, families were offered 6 (Tasmania) or 9 (Victoria) visits in the first two years of their children's life. Typically, Child and Family Health visits happen in local centres. This means that visits can be challenging to get to, when families have young children or other responsibilities. To overcome these challenges and offer families more support, the right@home project provided the nurse visits in families' homes. The program starts in pregnancy for most women, who are offered 25 nurse visits until their baby turns 2 years old.

At visits, nurses work with parents on their goals and needs. This includes helping with feeding, parenting, and a baby's sleep and settling. Nurses talked about ways to bond with babies and how to support a baby's language and development. They also supported women with their own health and wellbeing. As researchers, our job was to understand if offering the home visits could help families when compared with the usual Child and Family Health service.

The right@home journey

right@home started almost 10 years ago when 5586 pregnant women at 10 public hospitals across Victoria and Tasmania completed a brief survey. You might remember chatting to a right@home researcher or answering some questions about yourself and your pregnancy while you waited for your antenatal appointment. Women experiencing common challenges such as stress, or lower social support, or chronic illness were invited to take part. A computer program was used to divide everyone into two groups. Half were offered the extra nurse visits and half were offered the usual Child and Family Health service. By



following up with families over time, it was possible to understand if the extra visits could help families and children.

When children turned two years old

right@home researchers visited families around children's first birthday and again close to their second birthday. By two years, women reported that the home nurse visits helped with the way they cared for and responded to their child. The visits also helped with the home environment. Families were happy to be part of the project — 82% agreed to continue the yearly research interviews.

At children's third birthdays

At the 3-year-old visit, the right@home researchers played games with children. Women said that the right@home program helped their mental health and wellbeing. At this time, many children had grown lots of hair and kindly allowed the right@home researchers to cut a little piece. Many women did the same. This was to understand whether cortisol in hair can show how early experiences relate to stress levels.

At four and five years old

Families welcomed the right@home researcher back into their homes at children's fourth and fifth birthdays. Children played games on the tablet and practised writing their name. It was great to see how much children had grown in just one year! At these visits, women reported benefits to their own wellbeing, and parenting, family relationships and their children's mental health.

At children's sixth birthdays

At 6 years, right@home researchers phoned families to check in. This was the first year without a researcher visit in families' home. The phone calls were longer than usual and women were asked how they were doing and about their children's interests, personality, and behaviours. Families who were offered the extra nurse visits said it had benefited their parenting, and their children's learning, health, and behaviour.



For some families, the 6-year phone calls happened during periods of home learning or “lockdown”. You may remember answering extra questions about the experience of the pandemic and lockdown. This was a challenging time when many families experienced job loss and family stress. It was also a time when parents reported positive experiences, such as finding good ways of coping as a family.



Starting school

Starting school can be an exciting and scary time for children (and parents!). Many of the children in right@home started school during the COVID-19 pandemic, which made it unlike any other school year. Teachers were surveyed about how children in right@home were settling in. When children were in families that had received the early nurse visits, teachers said it had helped children with their memory and reading skills.

On behalf of everyone in the right@home project, thank you again!

What's next for right@home?

In grade 3, many children will do the NAPLAN (National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy). At the beginning of the right@home project, many parents gave permission for the research team to access children's NAPLAN information. This will make it possible to understand whether the nurse visits benefit children's reading, writing and maths skills as they grow. We will post new reports and information on the [right@home project's website](#), so please check in to see what's new, and we'll be available if families want to contact us or ask questions or want to update contact details.

Keeping in contact

If you need to update your contact details or have any questions about the project, please email right@home@mcri.edu.au

Extra support

The Raising Children Network has extra information about children's development and parenting: www.raisingchildren.net.au

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The Centre for Community Child Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

