

Children's Centres for early childhood development and parenting

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As the centrepiece of the South Australian Government's approach to enhancing early childhood development and supporting families with young children, Children's Centres represent an innovative universally accessible service on a number of levels: legislation, policy and governance; social and cultural dimensions for communities; and, new opportunities for system reforms in service and program delivery.

This process of innovation is clearly principled and has led to defining new ways of working with children and their families producing a range of outcomes that directly benefit and build the capacities of the participating client groups and also the wider community. It positions children at the centre of the learning and wellbeing programs. It ensures that their developmental needs are brought into sharp focus as families are supported to have genuine partnerships in programs and services, thus strengthening their capacity to provide nurturing and safe environments for children's wellbeing. This, in turn, assists agencies to provide coordinated approaches to early childhood policy in the areas of health care and intervention, child protection and learning support.

As innovative practice, a number of unintended barriers to the delivery of integrated services through partnerships between government agencies and non-government organisations have been addressed. The growth of Children's Centres has enabled the design of new models of leadership and program management, and, facilitated creative vistas for professional learning for the workers in care and education.