

SWiS NEWS



social workers
in schools

••• JANUARY 2007

Foreword... Hello everyone

I want to wish everyone a Happy New Year. Last year was a busy year for the SWiS service with many events and activities taking place both here and overseas.



One of those that comes to mind is the International SWiS conference which was held in South Korea in September. I and two other New Zealand delegates were very privileged to be able to attend. It has given us much food for thought about areas for future development as the service continues to mature.

One of our aims was to succeed in our bid to hold the 2009 International Conference here in New Zealand and I'm really pleased to be able to tell you that we were successful. This will assist us with strengthening our international links which is an important step forward.

We were also busy last year with the IT project, with developing an orientation programme for new social workers and with looking at how to improve the training we offer. We have greatly appreciated your input to these work items.

I want to build on this and of course our annual conference presents us with the opportunity to do so. Planning for this is well underway and this year's conference will be held in Christchurch at the beginning of May.

It is a very exciting time for the service and I want to thank you for your hard work in making it what it is.

Kind regards

Veronica Bennett

Senior Advisor, SWiS



in this issue

- SWiS Conference 2007
- Coffee Korero programme
- International Conference

note for readers

Our next issue will be in June 2007. You can submit items to the editor so we look forward to your contributions.

Please post them to:

Hilda Tait

SWiS News Editor

Child, Youth and Family

PO Box 2620

Wellington

or email cyf_swis@cyf.govt.nz

by Friday 11 May 2007

(Please note that we reserve the right to edit articles if necessary due to space constraints).



Playing of the children's DVD



Local children playing paper, scissors, rock



Michael and Veronica with conference organiser Professor Sun Wha Moon (left) and a colleague

International Conference in South Korea

The International SWIS conference took place in September 2006 in the South Korean city of Busan. It was attended by Veronica Bennett and two other delegates associated with the SWIS service in New Zealand, Michael Belgrave and Edwina Brookes.

Michael is an Associate Professor of Social Policy at Massey University and Edwina is a Team Leader for Te Puna Whaiora Glenelg Children's Health Camp based in Christchurch. She is also a member of the group establishing the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers Interest Group for SWIS.

The team prepared a detailed and in-depth presentation for the approximately 300 delegates. This gave an overview of New Zealand's social and economic situation and policies for children.

The presentation then explained the SWIS model as it exists in New Zealand with its focus on prevention/early intervention, its voluntary nature and the collaborative intersectoral approach with partnership at its heart. There was information about SWIS's goals and core values and an outline of the responsibilities of the government, social service provider, social worker and school in turn.

The presentation ended with a description of some of the benefits of the model – that the professional role of the social worker allows them to advocate for the child and family, brings resources to the school from the social service sector and community partners and helps build strong communities around the school, with the parents engaging in the education process.

It also indicated some of the challenges of the SWIS model, including that of developing good relations between schools and

providers when each hold their own views and perspectives.

There was also reference to New Zealand's uniqueness in terms of Maori models of practice, the importance of strengths-based values and practice and preventative programmes.

The team was also able to present a video made by the children of Aranui Primary School in Christchurch describing the impact of having a social worker in their school. This video was one of the rare occasions during the conference when the voices of children themselves could be heard.

Delegates at the conference came from countries as diverse as Scandinavia, Australia, Mongolia, India, America, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Japan, Taiwan and Vietnam.

It was clear that all countries recognised that social workers in schools is a specialist area of work.

Michael Belgrave said, "it was apparent that despite us working in very different settings there was still an enormous amount of common ground. We are all dealing with children and schooling and the conference gave us a really good opportunity to explore these sorts of things and share ideas about what we could and should be doing."

He says, "One of the biggest differences was to see that in Scandinavia social workers are mostly focused on emotional issues like grieving and identity. Poverty does not really feature

at all. Conversely in Bangladesh they are dealing with problems around food shortages, lack of shelter rather than the emotional stuff. New Zealand falls in between these two extremes.”

Looking to the future it is clear that SWIS in New Zealand has developed independently of international models, along lines modelled to suit the situation and the indigenous people here. The main difference according to Michael is that our social workers are very much more school social workers who happen to be based in schools rather than the school’s social workers. In effect in other countries the social workers are seen more as “servants of the school and are caught up more with making sure the school is run efficiently, so the school is their main focus.”

Learning from the conference included a better ability to view the New Zealand service model from an international perspective and understand that while there is still a lot to learn, New Zealand SWIS also has a lot to offer.

The other step to think about is how New Zealand grows more in line with international best practice and to evaluate the service against that.

“It would be good to try and get access to other things for people to try,” said Michael. “I think now the service has reached that level of maturity this should be part of the continual self-evaluation of our practice. I think it’s tremendously exciting.”

An additional piece of good news is that New Zealand has won its bid to host the next international conference here in April 2009.

Interest Group accepted

At the recent Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) Annual General Meeting, the proposal by a group of SWIS social workers for its own Interest Group within the Association was accepted.

The ANZASW Executive Officer, Dominic, will support the Group in writing its own terms of reference and rules and this draft

will be sent to the Group members early this year for comments and input.

Once this document is finalised, Dominic will submit it to the ANZASW National Executive at its next meeting at the end of January. It can then formally approve the document as agreed at National Council and the Group can formally be created.

Those SWIS social workers who are Provisional Members of the ANZASW and working towards competency can also become members of the Interest Group. They need to pass their names onto Edwina Brookes. Anyone seeking further information about the Interest Group, its aims and purpose should email Edwina Brookes at edwina.gl@healthcamps.org.nz

Training needs analysis

Over 40 providers and social workers from across New Zealand responded to a survey looking at training and professional development needs for both social workers and providers.

This information proved very interesting and helpful, and has been collated into two reports which contributed to a presentation at the provider forum last November.

It is intended the information will support further discussion on the professional development requirements of the SWIS service and ways to support this. Conversations have begun with Massey University and others to begin to explore how we can meet these needs.

Many thanks to all those who completed the surveys, which showed an important consistency in views and ideas.

Enhancing Educational Opportunities for Child, Youth and Family Clients

By Fiona Sturrock, Senior Research Analyst, Child, Youth and Family

Ensuring good educational outcomes for children and young people in Child, Youth and Family's (CYF) guardianship can be a significant issue. To address this, Child, Youth and Family is working with the Ministry of Education on the Enhancing Educational Opportunities for CYF Clients initiative. This is part of a series of government initiatives under CYF's Blueprint Investment Strategy.

Enhancing Educational Opportunities is made up of two parts – Student Aide Support Services in schools (SAS) and Supervisors for The Correspondence School (STCS). SAS aims to maintain or re-establish engagement and attendance, while encouraging educational achievement at mainstream schools. STCS aims to support learning for a client directly referred

by CYF to The Correspondence School.

CYF's Research and Evaluation team carried out the evaluation of SAS and STCS. At the end of each school term throughout 2006, CYF social workers and schools completed a review that assessed both the progress of the child or young person and the degree of interagency collaboration. To supplement these written reviews, the Education Review Office was contracted to interview, by phone or in person, a sample of students, caregivers, social workers, principals/teachers, student aides, Group Special Education staff and Ministry Student Support staff to explore in more detail how SAS and STCS have worked.

The interview component of the evaluation recognised the importance of including

the voices of the child or young person and her/his caregiver in an assessment of the Enhancing Educational Opportunities initiative.

Initial findings from the evaluation indicate that this initiative is proving successful for some students.

The information provided through the evaluation is a crucial component to our understanding of what works best in helping our children and young people to access and engage in mainstream education.

The evaluation report is scheduled to be completed early this year. For further information please contact Fiona Sturrock of the CYF research team on 04 918 9040 or email fiona.sturrock002@cyf.govt.nz

Preventative Programmes Guidelines Working Group

Work has been progressing on developing a set of preventative programme guidelines for social workers, providers, and school staff. Two school principals, two provider managers, two social workers, a Child, Youth and Family contract specialist and approvals assessor, and a SWIS advisor make up the working group.

There is an additional reference group comprising a social worker, school principal, Ministry of Education

representative, provider manager, and a legal representative.

It is intended to also have a cultural review of the content to ensure it meets the needs of Maori and Pacific families. The Working Group has met monthly since August 2006 and has made good progress on the guidelines with an emphasis on creating a 'user friendly' document that people will find accessible and helpful.

It is intended the guidelines will be available for national feedback this March, with the final document ready for release by May.

Beach party launches countdown to Children's Day

The new March date for Children's Day was launched with much excitement, shouting and splashing during a beach-themed party.

Held at the West Wave Aquatic Centre in Waitakere, children from three local schools were taken on a magical journey of dolphin and mermaid puppets, pirates and a lesson all about the Hector's dolphin (the theme indigenous animal for Children's Day 2007).

Celebrations ended with the pirates taking the children on a treasure hunt and finally making the children 'walk the plank' into the pool.

The new Children's Day website (www.childrensday.org.nz) was also launched on the same day. Who said fish can't ride bicycles? You can see animated Hector's dolphins as you've never seen them before: riding a BMX, hula dancing, lounging on a beanbag, and much more. You can also listen to a number of New Zealand celebrities talking about their childhood memories.

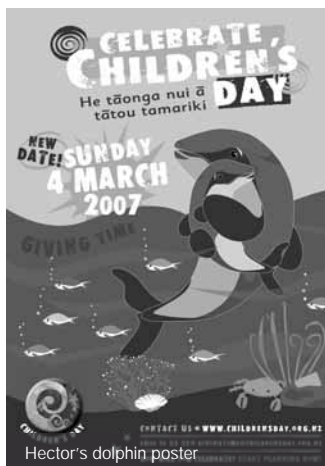
Children's Commissioner Dr Cindy Kiro attended the launch, and also features as a voice on the website. She wholeheartedly endorses the 2007 theme 'giving time'.

"Time is the most valuable commodity you can give your children," said Dr Kiro. "In talking with children it is the thing that they are consistently identifying as most wanting from their parents."

From now on Children's Day will be on the first Sunday in March, ie 4 March 2007.



Launch event beach party



Hector's dolphin poster



New staff member

Dora Esquivel has joined the SWIS team as an advisor, working specifically on the IT upgrade project. Dora has been with the team since October 2006.

Since then she has been busy travelling to a number of social workers around the country, upgrading laptops as part of the upgrade process. Some of the places she has been to include Timaru, around the Wellington region, Wanganui, New Plymouth, Porirua and Auckland. Not a bad way for someone from the United States to find out more about New Zealand!

Dora's role has also included answering many helpdesk calls relating to the database and training people in its use. Now that the upgrade is just about complete, social workers have been using the new system to send in data required for the next quarterly report.

Dora has a degree in Information Systems Management from the University of Maryland in Maryland, USA and before that spent several years working in the logistics field. Her contract runs until June.

Coffee Korero

Relationships are a priority at Moerewa School in Northland. One of the strategies used to engage with whānau on a regular basis is what the school calls a "Coffee Korero".

The Principal, Keri Milne-Ihimaera, meets with whānau once a month at the local café. Coffee, hot chocolates and a few muffins are not the only things on the menu.

"This is an opportunity for parents to meet regularly with me in an informal setting away from school," Ms Milne-Ihimaera said of the initiative which began nearly two years ago.

"On average we can expect between 15-20 parents to arrive, and we take things from there! There is no agenda and parents enjoy the time spent not only with me but with other parents and other community help as well."

The impact of the Coffee Korero group is that the school is noticing that parents are feeling much more comfortable about coming through its doors.

All sorts of issues are discussed and parents always have great ideas about simple things the school could do.

This is also seen as an opportunity for the school to talk about new school developments with parents. Parents have made suggestions about better ways of ordering lunches and ways parents can help their child with their schoolwork.

The new healthy options in the tuck shop were discussed with this group before being implemented, and this is becoming one regular

way to get feedback from parents about ideas for a new school uniform to be introduced this year. It has become a regular item on the Moerewa School calendar!

Lynne Chase-Hyde is the Social worker in Schools, working in Moerewa, Tautoro and Kaikohe East Schools. Lynne attends each of the Coffee Korero and is committed to supporting the Group in various capacities which range from financial assistance for school-based programmes, advocacy, and mediator, to hands on social work, being the taxi driver to a good listener or counsellor.

Lynne's role is to make sure the gathering happens and is a rewarding experience for all participants, the whānau, the school, other agencies and community groups meeting in one relaxed forum to share their views and concerns.

The Coffee Korero group has also created another avenue for whānau to consult with the social worker and implement change or make referrals. It is an opportunity for the social worker to meet with other community networks and whānau and gain a clearer picture of what the social needs are within the community.

Social Workers in Schools in the mid-North is starting to see some positive outcomes from working collaboratively with the community and other agencies. Lynne is part of a team of six social workers in schools employed by Ngapuhi Iwi Social Services who provide services to 20 schools throughout the mid-North.

SWiS 2007 Conference

Good progress is being made on the 2007 SWiS conference which is confirmed to be held in Christchurch, at the Chateau on the Park Hotel and Conference centre between 1–4 May.

The theme of this year's conference is *'Acknowledge the past, Celebrate the present, Create the future'* and a children's drawing competition was held to help develop the logo for the conference.

This will be used in the programme.

As always the committee is planning an exciting line up of speakers and events. Cindy Kiro, Children's Commissioner and Nicola Meek of Secondary Futures, have already been confirmed.

The registration pack with further details about the conference will be sent out in late February.

Provider Forum

A national SWiS provider forum was held in November 2006 in Auckland. Provider forums provide an opportunity for discussion between providers and CYF on current delivery practices and ongoing development of the service.

The national forum offered the chance for providers from all around the country to meet with each other. This resulted in a group of 75 provider representatives, ranging from supervisors, managers and chief executives, gathering in Auckland for two days, along with CYF contract specialists and team leaders and MSD policy and research staff.

A very full programme covering items such as the Preventative Programme Guidelines, Training Needs Analysis, Partnering Agreements, IT Project, Evaluation 2007 and future NGO capability was presented.

As the busy agenda got under way, discussion was raised regarding appropriate observation of protocols. The diversity of roles and needs was also acknowledged and this resulted in taking time to explore how best to address the many needs.

Room was created for the various groups to meet and discuss issues pertinent to them. At the end of the first day, a Maori Caucus group met and on day two a Managers/CE group and a Supervisors group met.

The discussions and various topics allowed

for a deeper exploration of our relationships and how we work together. Proposed strategies moving forward include:

- an undertaking to continue working closely together to strengthen our working relationship, inclusive of Te Tiriti O Waitangi principles;
- a proposal for future gatherings to be hosted by providers;
- establishing a permanent advisory group to CYF to provide guidance.

Much valuable learning and feedback was generated during the two days on current and future SWiS developments.



New social workers' orientation

The first delivery of the two-day orientation programme for new social workers was held on the 13-14 September at the Child, Youth and Family Learning and Development Unit in Auckland.

In total, 13 new social workers attended the training, and one other social worker took part as a refresher. The training was delivered by Gabrielle Appleton

(who has since left) and Nicki Weld, SWiS advisors.

The orientation programme combines both the introductory and advanced database training, along with an overview of the SWiS service and practice discussions.

Participants described the two days as providing "real, tangible, and clear" information, and an "excellent combination

of IT help and practice discussions." They enjoyed the chance to meet each other and discuss experiences and challenges they were encountering in their new role. It is intended the orientation training will run four times a year across the main centres.

The next orientation will be 27-28 March in Wellington. Information has been sent to providers for registering social workers.

IT update

For the past few months, Dora Esquivel has worked closely with Jeremy Harding of the IT team on the IT upgrade project. During that time she has been focused on providing all SWIS database users with the upgraded SWIS database version and ensuring that all users are able to access the database, backup and can manoeuvre through the new database system. The upgrade process has now been completed and the reporting portal is in the final stages of deployment.

The main challenge has been the installation of the new upgrade as each

site has presented unique system problems but these have been worked through.

Dora says, “the new database provides users with easier management and storage of data. Users will be able to backup frequently and have the data sent centrally to our local server. This method provides users with a safety net, in case their laptop is stolen or lost. Data will be easier to recover for them.”

Dora has been responding to daily calls and emails from users about the new

system and between October and December last year she visited over 10 sites around the country. She says, “the hands on experience was crucial and it was great meeting some of the social workers and providers.”

So far the feedback on the new system has been positive. The next step is the reporting process for the new system and making sure that users have the minimum computer specifications to efficiently have the SWIS database work as it should.

A practice thought

from *Nicki Weld*

As part of the Preventative Programmes Guidelines Working Group, we have had some interesting conversations about the words ‘prevention’ and ‘early intervention’.

Programmes aimed at prevention intend to stop a negative behaviour or issue beginning, while early intervention is about addressing a behaviour or issue that is already present that we don’t want to escalate any further. SWIS programmes also build on existing strengths and support the growth of positive behaviour that enhances potential. This ensures social work with children and families is also proactive and/or responsive rather than a phrase I heard recently about social work being about “relationships built around crisis.”

If social work only involves working relationships built around crisis, then the opportunity for proactive work can be diminished as the tendency may be to only be involved when things go wrong.

For social workers in schools there is a unique opportunity for intervention work that does not necessarily require a crisis for services to be engaged. This supports the notion of “creating” rather than “reacting” in social work. These two words are comprised of the same letters yet a simple shift around of the order provides for a very different response.

Instead of reacting to problems, if we can instead pause and take time to look at things differently and create solutions with children and families we are likely to have better outcomes.

This is also a good message for children and parents – instead of reacting, try creating – as a way to build more successful responses to challenges they might face.