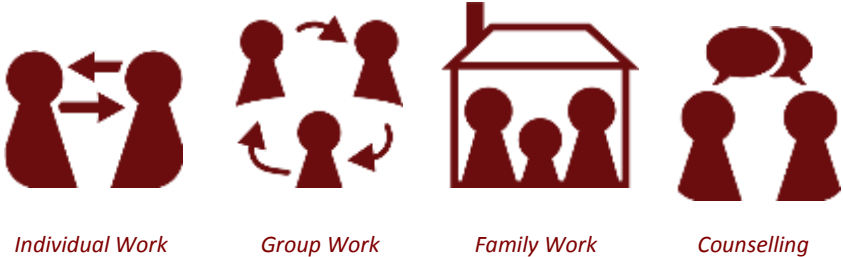


The Bumblebees Therapeutic Preschool (BTPS) Australia



Type of intervention



Target group/s, level/s of prevention and sub-group/s:



Primary prevention

Young Children (0-5 Years) | Male & Female | Individual Work, Group Work, Family Work, Counselling | English



Secondary prevention

Young Children (0-5 Years) | Male & Female | Individual Work, Group Work, Family Work, Counselling | English

Target population

Children aged 3-5 years who have been sexually abused or who have experienced domestic violence; children aged 3-5 years exhibiting sexualised behaviours; parents, carers and other family members of these children; mainstream kindergartens and preschools; other service providers.

Delivery organisation

Phoenix House, Bundaberg, Queensland, Australia

Mode and context of delivery

The BTPS programme provides assessment, therapy and education for children aged 3-5 years and their families. The programme consists of a twice weekly therapeutic preschool (with an educational, cultural and therapeutic stream), a home visiting programme, parent/carer education and counselling, and consultation and training for other key stakeholders involved in the care of the family.

Level/Nature of staff expertise required

Therapeutic stream: Completion of a minimum Bachelor of Social Work or Psychology and membership of the relevant professional body.

Educational Stream: Completion of a minimum Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood

Cultural Stream: Under section 25 of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991, there is a genuine occupational requirement for the person employed to be indigenous to the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Community. The possession of relevant qualifications are advantageous.

Intensity/extent of engagement with target group(s)

Varies according to changing needs of the child/family; may be up to three times a week (eight hours).

Description of intervention

The goal of the BTPS is to mitigate early adverse childhood experiences and to change the potential negative outcomes for very young children and their families following trauma. The BTPS uses a comprehensive ecological model that considers what the Aboriginal understanding of 'community' means. It operates in multiple settings, with all family members, to ensure that vulnerable children and their families have access to the service. Responses such as soft entry points and a focus on access through the provision of transport and flexible service hours, all increase the engagement of vulnerable children and families. Activities include:

- Family Assessment: Families may self-refer to the BTPS or are referred by statutory and non-Government organisations. Family assessment is ongoing, culturally relevant and occurs within multiple settings.
- A Therapeutic Preschool: The preschool is available twice weekly and there is a high staff/volunteer to child ratio of 1:2. The preschool provides the following streams:
 - The therapeutic Stream: This utilises a range of supportive and psychodynamic therapies and neuro-biologically informed activities such as yoga, massage, music and First Australian ways of healing, with children on an individual basis or in groups. It aims to increase a secure base for children, positive peer relationships, emotional and social development, social competencies, to alleviate trauma symptoms and to develop a healthy sexuality and protective behaviours.
 - The Education Stream: This is stage appropriate and provides a combination of play based learning and age appropriate curricula. This stream aims to increase school readiness in vulnerable and traumatised children, as well as reintegrating children into mainstream kindergarten/preschool at the earliest opportunity.
 - The Cultural Stream: This aims to educate all children about Australia's culture & history and to enable Aboriginal children to gain a sense of spiritual connection, belonging and identity to their culture which may have been diminished through the impact of colonisation. Cultural safety is interwoven through the preschool and daily cultural groups are provided.
- Individual, couple and family counselling: Counselling is provided for the whole of the family across all settings. Family members have access to the full range of programmes and seamless referral to other organisations as required.

- Home visiting and outreach: Home visiting/outreach is available to all families, including those whose children cannot attend the BTPS. It enhances assessment, provides opportunities to work with families upon strengthening attachment, providing coaching, parent education and skills training.
- Parent education and skills training: Education and skills training is provided for the whole of a community, including parents, carers and other family members, with the aim to celebrate strengths and to increase parenting skills, coping skills, attachment and resilience.
- Information, advice and referral: This is provided through a number of mediums (including on the internet) to families. A seamless referral process is an essential component of a 'wrap around' approach and ensures the right service is available at the right time.
- Professional, community and school education and training programmes: Consultations, workshops and training are provided to professionals, community and schools.
- Community capacity building and development: This includes the participation of community members in governance, steering committees, volunteering and community development projects.

The BTPS seeks to achieve a range of immediate, intermediate and longer term outcomes for children and families, which ultimately leads to healthier and safer communities.

Evaluation

The BTPS uses evidence based strategies and is also developing the evidence base for its own innovative practice through its long term partnership with CQ University and Flinders University. The BTPS has been subject to external evaluation and is recognised by the Australian Institute of Family Studies as a promising practice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. A manual and training is available for programme implementation.

References

An Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) promising practice. See <http://www.aifs.gov.au/acsa/research/practiceprograms/bumblebees.html>

Prentice, K., Signal, T., & Taylor, N. (2012). What's the buzz? Bumblebees: A therapeutic preschool. *Sexual Abuse in Australia and New Zealand*, 4(1): 23-33.

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