Kingston Family and Children’s Strategy
(Incorporating the Municipal Early Years Plan)
2013 - 2017
Acknowledgements

The Kingston City Council would like to express its appreciation by acknowledging each person and service provider who contributed to the development of the Family and Children’s Strategy including:

- Members of the Kingston Family and Children’s Services Partnership; including members of the Parent Advisory Group who gave their valuable time voluntarily and provided unique insights and understandings into the needs and wellbeing of local families and children;
- Families and service providers who completed surveys and/or attended focus group sessions; and
- Semann and Slattery Consultancy Group for undertaking the research and consultation in preparation for the development of Family and Children’s Strategy.

These contributions, along with the research undertaken, provided an understanding of the needs of families and children living in the City of Kingston.

For more information

📞 1300 653 356

or visit the website

🌐 www.kingston.vic.gov.au
Mayor’s Message

Childhood is an important time in the lifelong development of a person.

It can be a wonderful time for parents, children and families. It is also a time when families and children need support, guidance and connections to community as babies grow into children, then adolescents.

National and international research clearly links outcomes in adulthood to the support and opportunities provided in early childhood. Services that local government offer play an important role in that support and guidance.

Kingston City Council plays a substantial role in providing support to families and children through the provision of services and activities, such as maternal and child health services, child care, playgroups, community centres, libraries, parenting programs and support groups. Council is committed to working in partnership with service providers and the community so that all children in the Kingston community have the best chance of enjoying a healthy, happy childhood.

The Kingston City Council has a vision for families and children where:

• Children have the best possible start in life;
• Children’s rights and views are reflected in policies, laws, programs and resource allocation;
• Strong partnerships create an environment that will maximise the development of children and their families; and
• The City of Kingston is developed in a manner that takes account of the needs and aspirations of children and their families.

Through the implementation of the Family and Children’s Strategy 2013 – 2017, Kingston City Council supports children as active and valued citizens, whose voices and opinions will be taken into consideration in decision making processes.

The Family and Children’s Strategy 2013-2017 supports the delivery of the Council Plan and the strategic objective to promote family and community wellbeing and participation in community life.

Cr Ron Brownlees OAM

Mayor, City of Kingston
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1 Introduction
1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

The City of Kingston is located in Melbourne’s outer south east and combines a range of land uses and economic activities. The municipality features significant residential areas and major industrial nodes and areas of primary industry. There are also significant areas designated for leisure and environmental values that boasts 13 km of beaches, natural wetlands, and world class golf courses.

In 2013 there are 152,981 people living in the City of Kingston with that figure predicted to increase to 157,437 by 2017, which is a forecast increase of 4,456. The reason for forecast population growth can be attributed to young people leaving home who will establish their own households and families, significant overseas and interstate migration.

In terms of age structure, in 2013 there are 9,272 children aged 0-4 years living in the City of Kingston (6.1% of the population) with that number forecast to increase to 9,392 (6% of the population) by 2017. In 2013 there are 12,083 children aged 5-11 years living in the City of Kingston (7.9% of the population) with that number forecast to increase to 12,343 (7.9% of the population) by 2017.

In terms of household or family types, in 2013 there are 19,382 (31.79%) of household or family types who are couples with dependant children living in the City of Kingston, with that number forecast to increase to 19,748 (31.1% of families) by 2017. In 2013 there are 5,971 sole parent families living in the City of Kingston (9.8% of household or family types) with that number forecast to increase to 6,162 in 2017.  

The Kingston City Council has a strong and proud history in the provision of Family and Children’s Services and is currently a direct provider of:

- Maternal and Child Health (MCH)
- Enhanced Maternal and Child Health
- National Immunisation Program
- Supported playgroups
- Long day care
- Family Day Care
- Funded Kindergarten Central Enrolment Scheme
- Outside school hours care (before and after school care and vacation care)
- Children’s Library Service
- Family services, and
- School Crossing Supervisors

In recent years the Kingston City Council has increasingly focussed on partnering with children, families, community, service providers and other levels of government in the planning and provision of high quality services to resident families, to ensure that children receive the best possible start in life.

1.2 Research

During the first years of life, the brain undergoes a series of extraordinary changes with significant learning and brain growth occurring during infancy. Brain research indicates that, from birth to five years of age, children already have most of the physical brain capacity they need. Consequently, the experiences, relationships, and attachments children have in the early years provides the context for all learning.

“When we invest wisely in children and families, the next generation will pay that back through a lifetime of productivity and responsible citizenship. When we fail to provide children with what they need to build a strong foundation for health and productive lives, we put our future prosperity and security at risk.”

Research regarding effective, evidence based early childhood education and care programs and services can yield significant short and long-term benefits that far exceed their costs. Research also suggests that careful targeting of early childhood development programs can optimise returns on investment and guard against the dilution of resources and effort.

While 85% of the core structure of the brain develops in the first three years of life, only 5% of public investments in children occur during these years. While the Australian Government has recently increased the level of investment in the early years the graph on the next page is still representative of the comparison between brain growth and public spending.

1 ID Consulting, Community Profile

2 Centre on the Developing Child, Harvard University
The growing consensus on the positive value of investment in the early years follows substantial economic studies of cost and benefits on a number of high quality programs. High quality early childhood programs, that have been rigorously evaluated for their preventive effects and their long-term benefits to individuals and society, provide the strongest evidence regarding the characteristics of effective early childhood interventions.

1.3 Rationale for the Family and Children’s Strategy

The Local Government Act Victoria 2009 outlines Local Governments role in service planning, coordination, advocacy, facilitation, provision and management of services. Given this, the Kingston City Council is uniquely placed to lead a collaborative partnership of services, children, parents, community organisations and government in the planning and delivery of services.

Through agreement between the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) on behalf of Victorian Councils and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), Municipal Early Years Plans (MEYP) have been the primary framework for service planning and change at the local level.

This Strategy is entitled Family and Children’s Strategy to reflect the focus on children aged birth through to 12 years of age and should be read in conjunction with the Family and Children’s Strategy Background Information and Data Supplementary Document. This will provide additional details that will be of particular assistance to children and family service providers and other interested parties regarding the previous planning for children and families in Kingston, the current policy context, broader Kingston City Council planning frameworks and the health and social profile of Kingston’s children and families.
1.4 What is a Family and Children’s Strategy or Municipal Early Years Plan?

A Family and Children’s Strategy (F&CS) is a local area strategic plan for the development and coordination of education, care and health services, activities and other local developments for children and families. A F&CS is tailored to suit local circumstances.

The MAV / DEECD model for MEYPs determines that they are not intended to be a plan for the whole “service system” within a municipality; rather they provide a starting point for planning. A MEYP articulates Council’s role in service and infrastructure provision, planning, advocacy and community development for children.

Kingston City Council’s F&CS is designed to provide the strategic direction for the development and co-ordination of educational, care and health programs and other activities that impact on the development of all children aged 0–12 years. The F&CS (2013-2017) will assist Council and community service organisations make decisions about the allocation of resources to meet the needs of children and families who live in the municipality.

Whilst the DEECD and MAV approach is to focus on 0-6 year olds, Kingston City Council noted that this approach would leave a planning gap for the 6-12 year old cohort, as Kingston City Council’s Youth Strategy focuses on ages 12-24 years. Therefore Kingston City Council’s F&CS has been expanded to incorporate 0-12 year olds.

1.5 Benefits for Council and the community of having a Family and Children’s Strategy

There are many benefits that potentially flow from the F&CS. These include:

- A strategic local direction shared by all, leads to improved service coordination;
- Promotion of beneficial partnerships and networks;
- A fairer, friendlier service system that families understand;
- Identification of issues concerning families and a realistic plan to address these;
- Stronger linkages across Council, families and the community;
- Integrated service planning across programs;
- Data and plans that will position Council to potentially attract funding and resources for new initiatives and projects;
- An influential collective force for Council to influence State and Commonwealth policy;
- Capacity to prioritise and allocate resources to areas of need;
- A framework to guide facility development;
- A strong advocacy tool for improved service and infrastructure funding;
- Strong partnerships and resource sharing with groups in the community;
- Empowered, informed and satisfied residents; and
- Identification of Council’s current and future role in supporting children and families.
1.6 Scope
The F&CS relates to children aged 0-12 years and their families and are considered in the context of the broader range of services and programs delivered by the Kingston City Council. The need for a coordinated approach has resulted in consideration of universal, secondary and tertiary services that relate to children’s education, health and care as described in the diagram in Appendix 2.

1.7 Family & Children’s Strategy Vision
The F&CS describes a vision and key goals that aim to address some of the issues raised in consultation with Kingston Family and Children’s Services Partnership (KFCSP). The vision and actions in this F&CS will only be realised through co-operation and partnerships across Council departments and between Council and the community (including other service providers).

The vision Council has for families and children in the City of Kingston is that;

- Children have the best possible start in life;
- Children’s rights and views are reflected in policies, laws, programs and resource allocation;
- Strong partnerships create an environment that will maximise the development of children and their families; and
- The City of Kingston is developed in a manner that takes account of the needs and aspirations of children and their families.

This vision will be achieved through actions that relate to the following objectives:

- Work in partnership with the community to enhance the wellbeing of children aged 0-12 years and their families through improved information provision and active participation;
- Create natural and urban environments that enhance the City of Kingston as a child and family friendly city; and
- Promote access to inclusive family and children services and facilities that meet the current and future demand.

1.8 Underpinning principles
The principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child underpins the development of the F&CS and will assist Kingston to become a city that values and respects its children and families.

Kingston City Council’s F&CS fits within the wider international, national, state and local government policy context. At the broadest level, responding to the needs and desires of Kingston’s children and young people is guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention outlines the civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights for children and young people less than 18 years of age. The four core principles of the Convention are:

- Non-discrimination;
- Devotion to the best interests of the child;
- The right to life, survival and development; and
- Respect for the views of the child.

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that public services and governments are to provide children with the freedom and opportunities to express their views and that the service or government must consider their views in a meaningful way. Consistent with this, children have the right to participate fully in family, cultural and social life and are a key partner in the development of the F&CS.

Through planning and consultation, Kingston City Council aims to implement the philosophies of Child Friendly Cities, which in practice means that children’s rights and views will be reflected in policies, laws, programs and budgets. Through the implementation of the F&CS, children will be active citizens and their voices and opinions will be taken into consideration and influence decision making processes.
1.9 Family and Children’s Service – service delivery environment

The family and children’s service system in Kingston is complex and multi layered. Services are offered at different levels:

- **Universal** - services that are available for everyone to use free or at a small charge; (i.e.; maternal and child health, immunisation, playgroups, toy libraries, child care, kindergarten, primary and secondary school, recreational and leisure pursuits, information);

- **Secondary** - services for people who need a greater level of support and assistance than just universal services; (i.e.; family support programs, counseling; employment support; legal and financial support); and

- **Tertiary** - very intensive services for the most “at risk” children and families; (i.e.; Child Protection, Juvenile Justice; housing information, support and provision; information and support to people experiencing issues with alcohol and other drugs; sexual health support; mental health support; support in relation to violence and abuse; disability support and information and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) services).

1.10 Role of State and Commonwealth Government

State and Commonwealth Government play a major role in the policy and funding elements of children and family services delivery. The State Government also plays a service delivery role in relation to services such as Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS), education (e.g. kindergarten and centre based child care, primary and secondary schools), child protection and juvenile justice.

1.11 Role of Local Government

With the introduction of Maternal and Child Health Services (MCH) in 1926, historically local government in Victoria has played a significant part in providing a wide range of children’s services. The Kingston City Council has a strong and proud history in the provision of child and family services. Kingston City Council Family and Children’s Services is the major provider of generalist services in the City of Kingston.

Councils are major facilitators of recreational projects and resources, including sports, arts and cultural activities and provide generalist children and family services and programs.

1.12 Role of community services providers and community groups

Community service providers tend to deliver secondary and tertiary child and family services that are more intensive and target disadvantaged or vulnerable children and families, such as:

- Culturally and linguistically diverse;
- Early intervention services;
- Family counselling;
- Disability services; and
- Community health.

In addition, community service providers also provide a range of recreation and leisure programs, including sport, art and cultural initiatives.

1.13 Role of private providers

The community service environment is a rapidly changing environment. A range of services are provided by the for-profit sector. These services tend to be focused on mental health provision, recreational services and educational support. In addition, the private sector plays a significant role in the provision of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services and primary school education in Kingston.

4 Future Directions for the Victorian Maternal and Child Health Service, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2007
2 Policy Summary
2. Policy Summary

The F&CS aims to provide strategic direction in the support of young children residing in the City of Kingston through the integration of education, care health services, activities and other local developments. It has been developed based on the international and national research that indicates the critical aspect of investing in the early years of childhood by government.

All Australian governments have committed to making early childhood an area of national reform. The following polices provide a strategic direction for the delivery of quality and responsive family and children’s services in a National and state context and have informed the development of the F&CS:

National policy context:
- Protecting Children is Everyone’s Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020;
- The Council of Australian Governments (COAG);
- National Quality Framework;
- Belonging, Being & Becoming: the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia; and
- My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Child Care in Australia.

2.1 Victorian policy context:
- Charter of Human Rights
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework: For all Children from Birth to Eight Years
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
- Strategic Framework for Family Services
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005

Additionally, the policy reforms address the issue of universal access for all children, which include children from Indigenous cultures, socially disadvantaged or vulnerable children, and children with additional needs. This principle specifies the concept of ‘Universal Access’ as enabling participation for all children in ECEC settings by identifying and addressing the barriers experienced by differing community groups.

Significantly, the review of the key policies that relate to young children identified a lack of policy pertaining to children aged between eight to twelve years of age. This age group is often referred to as the middle years.

Please see the F&CS Background Information & Data Supplementary Document for detailed International, National and State Policy information.
Kingston City Council’s Planning Framework
3. **Kingston City Council's Planning Framework**

Local Government is recognised by the Victorian Government as the key planner of family and children’s services within municipal boundaries, undertaking municipal early years planning as an element of its corporate planning processes. This F&CS links strategically to Council’s Corporate Plan and the actions relate to the five Planned Outcomes in the Council Plan. These Outcomes are:

1. Safe accessible and appropriate assets (infrastructure) that meet community needs now and in the future;
2. A sustainable green environment that enhances the appeal and quality of life in the City of Kingston;
3. A healthy and secure community;
4. A prosperous community; and
5. Quality leadership and governance.

Issues relevant to children and families, that were raised during the F&CS consultation and that are evident in the health and social data, are addressed in a range of Council strategic plans that have been considered in the development of the F&CS. These strategies include:

Refer to the F&CS Background Information and Data Supplementary Document for more information regarding specific Strategies and Plans that contribute to the wellbeing of children and families in the City of Kingston.
Consultation and Health & Social Data Summary
4. Consultation and Health & Social Data Summary

4.1 Kingston’s Family & Children’s Services Partnership

During 2008 the Kingston Family and Children’s Services Partnership (KFCSP) was developed as a time limited group to guide the development of the F&CS. The KFCSP was characterised by children, parents and service providers working together with the objective that Kingston’s children get the best start in life. The KFCSP played a central role to the development of Kingston’s F&CS, and in particular, the consultation process.

The key principle that underpinned the KFCSP was the importance of community involvement and participation. The involvement of residents, parents, service providers and children themselves informs, encourages and supports the improvement of all child focused services within the City of Kingston. The KFCSP comprised of four key elements:

A. The Management Forum
   Comprised of Council representatives from the Family, Youth & Children’s Services Department and the Community Engagement teams. This forum ensured the KFCSP structure was established and functioned to meet the stated objectives.

B. Parent Advisory Forum
   Comprised of Kingston parents [representing key community groups], who had input into the planning, delivery and other key policy issues regarding families and children.

C. Family and Children’s Services Providers Advisory Forum
   This forum comprised representatives from key agencies / community stakeholder groups and government departments. The forum had a service delivery focus and members worked together through gathering information from a range of sources [including the parent and children’s forum] to advocate for the needs of children and families and to plan service delivery initiatives with a focus on service integration and collaboration.

D. Children’s Consultation Forum
   The Children’s Consultation Forum articulated Kingston City Council’s commitment to children being equal citizens. Rather than being provided with tokenistic opportunities for input into services provided for and to them, this forum provided a mechanism whereby children were able to:
   • Influence decisions about their city;
   • Express their opinion about the city they want now and in the future;
   • Participate in family, community and social life; and
   • Receive quality, accessible social health and well being, education and recreation programs and services that meet their needs and desires.

Diagram 2: The model.
4.2 Family & Children’s Strategy Consultation

In 2010 Semann & Slattery were engaged by the Kingston City Council to undertake research in preparation for the development of the F&CS.

The information gained through extensive consultation with the Kingston community, that included families and service providers, together with the background documents, provided a number of key themes for the focus of F&CS.

4.3 Consultation Themes and Methodology

A multi-faceted approach (qualitative and quantitative) was developed for the consultation. The following activities were undertaken:

- Online survey for families residing in the City of Kingston (n=206);
- Online survey for service providers operating in the City of Kingston (n=75);
- One targeted focus group with service providers (16 participants);
- One facilitated session with employees from across Kingston City Council, where preliminary findings were shared and ideas for future action generated;
- One consultation with Council staff focusing on their status as families;
- Ten targeted focus groups with community members (85 participants). Participants were targeted, and reflected a range of families and children across socio-economic class, gender, age and cultural background. Families from hard to reach communities, particularly those from economically and socially marginalised backgrounds, were included in this consultation.

The F&CS has been designed around three key themes, fundamental to the health, wellbeing and development of children and their families. The themes are based on priorities identified through the extensive community consultations, and recommendations from broader national and international research evidence developed in response to improving the outcomes for children and their families.

The following provides a summary of key themes associated with the F&CS and formed the basis for the development of the F&CS Action Plan.

4.3.1 Informed, Active and Healthy Families

Communication to support informed choice for families and children is a key factor in the development of strong supportive communities. Social connection can enhance wellbeing and inclusion to develop a sense of belonging and promote active citizenship.

Children of all abilities, cultural and linguistic backgrounds and their families participate and are visible in local communities, neighbourhoods and public space in the City of Kingston.

4.3.2 Physical Environment and Safety

Safe community and family environments are essential for children’s health development and wellbeing. Young children need physical activity from the time they are born. Physical activity represents the core medium by which creative, cognitive, social and emotional development in infants and children occurs.

4.3.3 Inclusive Family and Children’s Services and Facilities

This theme identified the range of services and programs offered to families (including maternal and child health services, kindergartens, playgroups, libraries, and recreational facilities), and associated issues, including service demand, affordability, provision, and buildings and infrastructure concerns.

4.4 Key Consultation Findings

Overall, the research identified a range of positive aspects associated with living in the City of Kingston, whilst identifying a number of challenges experienced by families and their children living in the municipality. Many of the issues mentioned by both families and service providers, require further investigation and/or action by Kingston City Council, other Government agencies and providers of child and family services.

There was a general view expressed by participants in this consultation that the City of Kingston is a family friendly place to live. A key positive component of this municipality identified by participants is the natural environment, including the proximity to the beach, parks, and other open places for families and children. Participants identified the cultural diversity of the City of Kingston as a positive attribute of this municipality.

“Whilst many participants spoke favourably regarding Family and Children’s services offered by Kingston City Council, participants also raised a number of challenges. These included: service demand, access to and affordability of services, the nature and appropriateness of services, and choice of services available. In addition, this research identified a perceived lack of services and support available for ‘older’ children aged 6 - 12 years. Participants also highlighted concerns regarding the condition of many of the family and children’s services buildings and infrastructure.”

Key findings include the following issues:

- Service providers across the City of Kingston raised concerns about issues pertaining to mental health. They identified mental health issues as a barrier for some families in accessing appropriate family and children’s services.
- Several issues pertaining to disability were identified. These included the lack of equality of access to services, lack of appropriate recreational facilities, and availability of respite services. Participants raised concerns about

5 Kingston – our community: A family and children’s service strategy consultation
services’ capacity to cater for children with additional needs, and in some cases, reported instances in which families who had children with additional needs were denied access to services.

- Some anxiety was expressed throughout the consultation process in regards to the impending changes to the early childhood sector with the implementation of the National Partnership on Early Childhood Education otherwise known as ‘Universal Access’ to Quality Early Childhood Education programs. Many families and service providers expressed a level of anxiety regarding these changes, both in terms of implications for a child’s access to early childhood programs and continuity of programs, as well as the potential affects on demand and facility management and the implications to the workforce.

- The importance of effective communication and information provision to families and children services in the municipality was highlighted throughout the consultation as an important component in supporting families and their children effectively. Participants expressed a strong desire to remain informed of services and facilities available to families and children, including festivals and community events. Participants identified having a user friendly website as being very important. Throughout this consultation participants reiterated their strong desire to have an updated directory of services available in various formats including online.

- Cities where children and families feel connected and valued require a political commitment as well as concerted action by all stakeholders connected to the city. While the Kingston City Council is viewed favourably in the area of service delivery and facilities, work is needed to be done to better hear the voices of children. Building a child friendly city, involves the development of the notion of the child as an active citizen. This is embedded in the city’s overall vision, policy, strategy and decision making process.

- Parks, playgrounds and open spaces were identified as significant positive aspects of living in the City of Kingston, and some of the most frequently used facilities available in the community. Safety for families and children was also identified as a key issue and a high priority for families with young children. Specific safety concerns related to the physical environment included, traffic and road safety and poor street lighting. Other safety issues raised by participants included the presence of people under the influence of drugs and alcohol in public spaces. Family violence was also seen as an issue requiring attention within the municipality.

- The gender of many participants in this consultation is significant, and clearly signals generally that women are the primary carers of children in the City of Kingston. This information places other carers such as grandparents or fathers in the minority, highlighting an area for consideration. Whilst many participants highlighted the cultural diversity of the municipality as a benefit of living in the community, many service providers identified “huge gaps” in relation to services targeting Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities. Postnatal depression was also identified as a significant issue requiring attention in these communities.

In summary, parents and service providers who participated in the development of the F&CS generally indicated strong support for the Kingston City Council’s service delivery and facility provision, roles and equally strong support for advocacy and community strengthening activities. There was also support for Council’s planning, information provision and community education functions.

4.5 Other Consultations

During Children’s Week, 2010 – children’s reflections were documented and displayed to demonstrate the connection between the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework and the views of the children living in the City of Kingston. Children were asked to talk about themselves and their family, share their feelings and experiences with others, and discuss their ideas about what makes up the world.

In March, 2011, the steering committee for the Chelsea Community Renewal project developed the “Have Your Say” campaign. The community consultation process included an online campaign with a survey and blog. In addition the committee hosted a community day located throughout the Chelsea shopping strip with a DJ and stalls highlighting the work of project groups as well as consulting directly with community members.

4.6 Victorian Local Government Support for Children, Young People and Their Families

The Victorian Local Government Support for Children, Young People and Their Families report [DEECD and MAV Report] documents the contributions made by 79 Councils in Victoria in helping families to raise their children, and assisting young people to make their own way in the world by providing a snapshot of local government support. The 2010 data was collected through surveys and included a broader focus than the 2006 data with the inclusion of questions related to support for older children (ages 8 to 12 years) and their families, and questions around support for children with disabilities. In addition to this data questions regarding councils’ contributions to coordination and planning were included in the survey.

The Report identified the long and proud history of local government in supporting children, young people and families that is characterised by an independent and locally responsive approach to supporting the needs of local community.

While the report noted a mixture of increased and decreased support of services, overall, the survey findings reinforced the notion that local government have a major involvement in supporting early childhood and young people’s services and activities.
5 Discussion
5. Discussion

Based on the findings presented in this report the following discussion has been divided into service type to assist in the identification of service specific issues.

5.1 Maternal and Child Health

The key themes that underpin the Commonwealth and State Government policy align very closely with the principles underlying the MCH. Relevant good practice outcomes should be incorporated into the MCH through annual planning and continuous improvement processes. Capacity is provided within the Universal MCH for Council to provide additional services that are tailored to local need.

In 2009, there were significant changes within the MCH and a new key ages and stages program was rolled out across Victoria. Families who attend MCH are presenting with an increase in complex health issues that require in depth nursing knowledge.

The Kingston City Council MCH currently undertakes approximately 27,000 consultations annually and provides group work in the following areas: Post Natal Depression (PND); Communication, Understanding, Education and Support for Early Parenting (CUES); and New Parents. A group is also provided for Young Parents and Fathers; as well as a transition group for participants of the PND groups. These groups have been specifically implemented in response to identified gaps within the local service system.

Emerging community trends have resulted in increasing demand for the provision of MCH. This can be attributed in part, to a range of social trends and complex issues impacting on families and the recent industry changes. Other pressure points impacting on the delivery of MCH include an ageing workforce resulting in an ongoing demand for part time positions as younger nurses strive to balance work life demands.
1.1.1 Breastfeeding Support Service
The Kingston City Council Breastfeeding Support Service is a robust program that incorporates evidence-based interventions and provides families who are breastfeeding their infants with information, assistance and support via a MCH Nurse, who is an internationally certified lactation consultant, either in the home, by telephone or at a designated MCH centre. There is an average of 800 consultations per year provided through the Breastfeeding Service. To support the breastfeeding rates within the municipality, Council should continue to provide the Kingston Breastfeeding Support Service for 20 hours per week; and within an early intervention support model.

5.2 Playgroups
A playgroup is a group of mums, dads, grandparents and caregivers who meet together regularly with their babies, toddlers and preschool-aged children for interaction and fun. Parents and caregivers work together voluntarily to provide their babies and young children with opportunities to learn through play. Playgroups are held at many different venues including community halls, kindergartens, churches, homes or anywhere people meet. The majority of playgroups are organised and run voluntarily by the participants of the group.

Community-operated playgroups play a valuable role in the suite of early childhood services by reducing social isolation and by providing peer and parenting support, friendship and links to the broader community including family and health services and supports.

However, a limited range of service providers also offer supported playgroups in which a paid professional plans and facilitates the playgroup. Supported playgroups are offered to groups with additional needs including those from a CALD background, who have a disability or who are vulnerable at risk families.

Anecdotal feedback indicates that families with additional needs can find it challenging to access community-operated playgroups and can benefit from attending more targeted supported playgroup environments that are delivered by a paid professional. In a supported playgroup environment, families have the benefit of being provided with more intensive support by meeting with other families who are in similar circumstances to reduce social isolation, build friendships, improve parenting skills and develop links to the broader family and health services and supports. To achieve this, an increased number, of a range of targeted playgroups, are required to support these families.

5.3 Centre Based Child Care
Centre-based long day care is the provision of care and education to children aged six weeks to five years. Services are operated within specific centres by qualified staff, typically between the hours of 7am and 6pm. Services are regulated by the Commonwealth Government, through the Education and Care Services National Regulations with a fee subsidy (claimable by parents and payable to the service) also provided by the Commonwealth Government. This type of child care and education is the most common form of care and education for children and most recognisable by the community.

Child care plays a crucial role and is a central mechanism that enables families to organise and structure family life and meet work, study or training commitments. In meeting the diverse needs of Kingston families Council plays a significant role in the delivery of child care and education services. Council has a key leadership role in supporting the ongoing viability of a diversity of child care and education services and in ensuring social justice and equity of access. The ‘mixed market’ environment of centre-based child care in the City of Kingston is divided between private, community-based and Council-operated services. Council’s four childcare centres have a total of 112 places, or approximately 6% of the overall market in the municipality.

Recent changes to regulations for children’s services will impact in two major areas, including: improvements to staff qualifications and the ratio of staff to children. It is expected that there will be at least moderate increases in staffing costs and loss of places as a result of these changes, which may translate into increased waiting lists and fees for families.

Council’s Child Care Centres are located within ageing infrastructure and require capital investment to continue to comply with National Regulations Children’s Services Regulations, with the appearance, capacity and amenity of the facilities being impacted. Further work is required to develop initiatives to improve facility amenity and increase opportunities for collaboration to support the needs of families.

5.4 Family Day Care
The Kingston City Council Family Day Care Scheme provides a unique alternative for families and children requiring care for children aged between six weeks to twelve years of age. Family Day Care Educators provide care and education in their own homes for other people’s children. The Kingston City Council Family Day Care Coordination Unit supports carers with training, resources and regular home visits and ensures that the educator and their home meet government standards.

The Coordination Unit also helps parents choose a suitable educator and is there to constantly monitor children’s wellbeing, progress and learning while attending Family Day Care.
The Coordination Unit works in a close partnership with educators to ensure they uphold organisational values and meet requirements set by legislation, and the National Quality System. The Coordination Unit also manage distribution of child care subsidies such as the Child Care Benefit. The Australian Government provides funding to the Coordination Unit to support the network of carers across the country.

The introduction of the National Early Childhood Education and Care reforms has had a significant impact on all Family Day Care Services. Worth noting is the introduction of the minimum qualification standards for the Early Childhood workforce. This reform has resulted in the reduction in the number of Family Day Care Educators associated with the Kingston City Council's Family Day Care Scheme which has resulted in increased waiting lists for the service.

### 5.5 Occasional Care

Occasional Care services are generally delivered by Community Centres and Neighbourhood Houses and provide childcare for short periods of time for children aged 0-5 years. Children are able to attend Occasional Care for up to 15 hours per week and families can access Occasional Care on either a permanent or casual basis.

Occasional Care Services were funded through the Take a Break neighbourhood occasional child care program which was jointly funded by the Commonwealth Government (70%) and the State Government (30%). This funding ceased from September 2011.

There were a total of seven occasional care services operating in Kingston eligible to receive the Take a Break funding. One of the community operated programs has ceased operation as a direct result of the funding loss while the remaining services continue to operate with increased fees.

The Commonwealth announced new funding and estimate that approximately 250 new Commonwealth funded occasional child care places were allocated in Victoria which is an increase of 35%. The majority of these places were allocated to rural areas and none were allocated in the City of Kingston.

### 5.6 Kindergarten

Evidence based research identifies that kindergarten increases a child’s positive long-term outcomes across a number of domains which are listed in the Early Years Learning Frameworks (EYLF). The introduction of the National Early Childhood Education and Care reforms has had a significant impact on kindergarten service delivery.

The Kingston City Council owns the majority of kindergarten facilities in the municipality, and parent committees and cluster managers operate the kindergarten programs, including being the licensee and employing kindergarten staff. Four year old kindergarten is funded by the State Government; however three year old programs are not funded and are delivered on a full fee paying basis. Kingston City Council’s role in the delivery of kindergartens is the planning, provision and maintenance of facilities, the administration of the central enrolment scheme for funded kindergarten programs and broad operational support.

5.7 Toy Library

A toy library is a place where parents or carers can go to borrow a large variety of educational toys, puzzles and games on a regular basis. Toy libraries aim to support families and encourage them to spend time playing with their children. Quality toys are expensive and children quickly become bored with a toy once its play value has been exhausted. By providing new play materials every week or two, parents can save money, lessen their consumer demand thus having a positive environmental impact and significantly contribute towards the development and education of their children.

In general, toy libraries are initiated and managed by the community. There is one community operated Toy Library located in Mordialloc. Development of toy library services in the North and South of the municipality would increase access to toy libraries for children and families.
5.8 School Aged Care and Vacation Care Programs

Before and After School Care services provide care to primary school aged children before and after school attendance hours. Vacation Care is provided to primary school aged children during the school holidays.

As with centre based childcare, school aged care programs are delivered by a range of providers, the majority of which are delivered by schools themselves and a range of private providers. Kingston City Council provides four (4) before school care programs and seven (7) after school care programs. Kingston City Council’s vacation care program operates four (4) venues across the city during school holidays. The Kingston City Council operates 36% of School Aged Care sites located in the City of Kingston.

Similar to the issues mentioned in the Family Day Care discussion, the introduction of the National Early Childhood Education and Care reforms has had a significant impact on the School Aged Care and Vacation Care Services. Again, the introduction of the minimum qualification standards for the early childhood workforce has been identified as a significant issue for this service as many staff members have been required to upgrade qualifications to remain working within the sector putting workforce pressures on the sector.

5.9 Family Support

The Kingston City Council’s family support services team provides support, information and referrals for families with complex needs; such families are at times under significant stress and anxiety. Family support programs are also delivered by a range of not for profit community organisations and are all aligned in partnership through the Child FIRST program which is a centralised referral system.

Family support is preventative and not a crisis service, which focuses on and assists families (with dependent children aged 0-18 years) whose capacity to function is limited and hindered by stresses of life. Typically the most significant issues facing families with complex needs relate to financial security, family breakdown and difficulties associated with appropriate parenting skills.
5.10 Cultural Diversity

Overall in the City of Kingston, 28% of the population is born overseas, and 20.3% are from a non English speaking background, compared with 29% and 22% respectively for the Melbourne Statistical Division.6

Through celebrations and events, and through service provision and programs that promote participation of children and families, various teams and departments within Kingston City Council and the wider community have been involved in communication strategies, media campaigns, and program development to assist residents from culturally diverse backgrounds to access their services.

A number of programs and initiatives have been developed that focus on children and families from a CALD background having equitable access to services especially early childhood services such as MCH, playgroups, kindergarten and affordable childcare options.

There are often language and cultural barriers that reduce the capacity for children and families to access services. Given these complexities, service provider and community partnerships are a valuable way of supporting CALD communities and increasing access to services and support programs.

5.11 Disability

In the social context, disability can be defined as the impact on a person’s ability to manage their daily lives or access opportunities in the community due to their illness, disease or impairment. This could include a child, parent or other family member. According to the Survey Disability Ageng and Carers data, that in the City of Kingston there is an estimated 32,228 people (23%) of the population who have a disability. Of these it is estimated that 1,951 are children aged 0-14 years.7

The majority of disability specific services are delivered by State and community agencies and focus on early intervention, education, recreation and respite.

Many families (where either the child or parent has a disability) and service providers have reported difficulty accessing children and family services. In particular there appears to be a real need for the development of capacity in terms of facilities and workforce within mainstream and targeted services that can support children with disabilities who have high and complex support needs.

5.12 Primary Schools

The City of Kingston has both State Government (20) and Independent Primary Schools (11) operating within the community. This mixture of educational systems can often translate into separation between each sector, which in turn has implications for the children and families that could include inconsistencies in parent participation, resources and delivery of curriculum.

Schools are increasingly under pressure to support the complex health and wellbeing needs of children and families in addition to providing an education. Many schools become a focal point for the community and schools play an enormous role in disseminating information and providing support services that aims to improve the health and well being of children and their families.

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7 Health Profile for the City of Kingston 2009
6. FAMILY AND CHILDREN’S STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2013-2017

NB: Issues relevant to children and families that were raised during the F&CS consultation and are evident in the health and social data, are addressed in a range of Council strategic plans and have been considered in the development of the F&CS. This Action Plan should be read in conjunction with relevant Council Strategies listed in the F&CS Background Information and Data Supplementary Document.

Theme 1: Informed, active and healthy families

Objective: Work in partnership with the community to enhance the wellbeing of children aged 0-12 years and their families through improved information provision and active participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Outcome Measures</th>
<th>Department in Council</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Develop a family and children specific communication, and social marketing strategy that aims to increase knowledge of available community services, health services, resources, facilities and infrastructure</td>
<td>Strategy completed</td>
<td>Family and Children’s Services Quality and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Explore and identify opportunities to utilise technology to enhance quality and contemporary service delivery (including participation in the Social Media Project to improve the range of service information provided to children and families)</td>
<td>Increased City of Kingston, Family and Children’s Services web page traffic.</td>
<td>Communications and Public Affairs, Family and Children’s Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indicators - Communication and Promotions, January 2012, 356 hits</td>
<td>Maternal and Child Health Facebook page, December 2011, 25 Likes</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1.3</td>
<td>Support the promotion of family friendly activities and events held by Kingston City Council</td>
<td>Activities and events identified</td>
<td>Family and Children’s Services Quality and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activities and events promoted</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Review and implement recommendations relating to the range of parent and professional training opportunities</td>
<td>Family and Children’s Services Seminars and Workshops Calendar review completed</td>
<td>Family and Children’s Services Quality and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased annual workshop and seminar attendance</td>
<td>Maternal and Child Health and Immunisation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Source – Family and Children’s Services Seminars, 2011, 143 attendances</td>
<td>Maternal and Child Health Parenting Workshops (CUES, Those Early Weeks, PPP, Intro to Solids), 2011, 633 attendances</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Actions</td>
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| 1.5 Participate in and support families and children’s involvement in the Community Vision process | Community Vision process promoted to Family and Children’s Services Networks and Partnership. | • Communications and Public Affairs  
• Family Youth and Children’s Services | 2013-2017 |
| 1.6 Support the State Governments Action Plan to Address Violence Against Women and their Children initiative | • Participate in DHS consultation  
• Facilitate the Preventing Violence Against Women working party | • Community Engagement | 2013-2017 |
| 1.7 Work towards creating community friendly spaces in Council facilities that support breastfeeding | • Evidence based State Government Standards implemented  
• Support Australian Breast Feeding Association | Maternal and Child Health and Immunisation | 2013-2017 |
| 1.8 Provide information to families promoting the health benefits of immunisation, healthy eating and breastfeeding | Information available in MCH waiting rooms and provided at developmental checks | Maternal and Child Health and Immunisation | 2013-2017 |
| 1.9 Participate in the mental health early intervention campaign “Act Belong Commit” | Active Play Kit available for loan through Council facilitated multicultural playgroups | Community Engagement | 2013-2017 |
| 1.10 Provide generalist family support service with referral to specialist services eg. Mental Health services, Financial Counselling, Family Violence Services, Drug and Alcohol Services and Child FIRST | • Provision of family support services  
• Appropriate referrals to secondary and tertiary services | Youth and Family Services | 2013-2017 |
| 1.11 Provide universal and inclusive Maternal and Child Health and Immunisation Services that build capacity for participation by families who are marginalised, have a disability and those from a CALD background | • Increased attendance rate at developmental checks  
• Increased immunisation rates  
• Appropriate referrals to secondary and tertiary services | Maternal and Child Health and Immunisation | 2013-2017 |
| 1.12 Review, monitor and report on progress of the Family and Children’s Strategy | Annual reviews completed | Family and Children’s Services Quality and Development | 2013-2017 |
### Theme 2: Physical Environment and Safety

**Objective:** Create natural and urban environments that enhance Kingston as a child and family friendly city.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Outcome Measures</th>
<th>Department in Council</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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</table>
| 2.1     | Develop and implement an organisation wide family and children’s consultation policy statement that reflects principles of Child Friendly Cities | • Children’s Consultation conducted  
• Policy Statement developed and adopted  
• Community Engagement Framework developed | Family and Children’s Services Quality and Development  
Community Engagement | 2014 |
| 2.2     | Plan safe walking and separate cycling paths which link residential neighbourhood to schools, activity centres and public transport | Increased number of walking and cycling paths | Sport and Recreation  
City Strategy | 2013-2017 |
| 2.3     | Provide children friendly urban spaces within activity centres in partnership with private investment | • Partners created with retailers and land developers  
• Engagement with children and families in the implementation of public space initiatives identified in Activity Centre Structure plans | City Strategy | 2013-2017 |
| 2.4     | Implement the Kingston Environmental Education Early Years Plan in Council operated Long Day Care services | • Funding secured  
• Program objectives achieved | Long Day Care and Family Day Care  
Environmental Planning | 2012-2014 |
| 2.5     | Provide information to families that promote environmentally sustainable practices eg. Chemical free cleaning options and alternative nappy options. | • Messages delivered via social media  
• Information disseminated to new parents groups | Maternal and Child Health and Immunisation  
Environmental Planning | 2013-2017 |
| 2.6     | Promote and distribute the Travel Smart Maps to increase children and families awareness of local cycling and walking routes as well as public transport options | • Travel Smart Maps distributed via Family and Children’s Services Networks, website, libraries, Community Centres and service points | Family and Children’s Services Quality and Development | 2013 |
### Theme 3: Inclusive Family and Children’s Services and Facilities

**Objective:** Promote access to inclusive family and children’s services and facilities that meet current and future demand.

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<th>Actions</th>
<th>Outcome Measures</th>
<th>Department in Council</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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</table>
| 3.1 Maintain and expand current level of family and children’s services provided by Council | • Delivery of services  
• Additional funding secured | Family, Youth and Children’s Services | 2013-2017        |
| 3.2 Implement children’s services sector national reforms in all Council operated children’s services including regulation changes and National Learning and Quality Frameworks | Rating received  
• School Aged Care  
• Long Day Care and Family Day Care | Family and Children’s Services | 2013-2020        |
| 3.3 Support early and middle years educators to communicate the value of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander culture | Annual initiative delivered  
• School Aged Care  
• Long Day Care and Family Day Care | Family and Children’s Services | 2013-2017        |
| 3.4 Complete Capacity Assessment Reports on behalf of DEECD as required to support planning for the implementation of Universal Access to Education and Care | • Plans submitted to DEECD and MAV | Family and Children’s Services | 2012-2013     |
| 3.5 Provide support to community and cluster managed kindergartens to implement Universal Access to 15 hours of kindergarten and the Council of Australian Governments reform agenda | • Change Management Action Plan submitted and approved by DEECD  
• Undertake Best Value Service Review of the Kindergarten Central Enrolment Scheme for Funded Kindergarten  
• Implement Kindergarten Service Agreement  
• Explore opportunities to support a range of kindergarten management options including DEECD approved kindergarten cluster management services | Family and Children’s Services | 2013-2017        |
| 3.6 Support and strengthen a connected early years sector through partnerships, networking and professional development opportunities | • Two partnership opportunities identified annually  
• Collaborative training sessions and conference delivered  
• Annual calendar of networking and professional development opportunities | Family and Children’s Services | 2013-2017        |
| 3.7 Using social, health and property data - monitor, review, plan and invest in the development of a range of accessible early years infrastructure that meets current and future demand including integrated community hubs | • Strategy completed and adopted by Council  
• Funding opportunities identified and applications submitted | Family, Youth and Children’s Services | 2013-2022        |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Outcome Measures</th>
<th>Department in Council</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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| 3.8 Provide support and identify opportunities to increase the number of community and facilitated playgroups that target vulnerable communities including children and families who have a disability and those from a CALD background | • External funding opportunities identified  
• Increased number of playgroups  
• Develop supported playgroups model  
Indicator- Playgroup Victoria, Kingston Registered Playgroups Data, September 2011, 40 Playgroups | • Family and Children’s Services Quality and Development  
• Maternal and Child Health and Immunisation  
• Long Day Care and Family Day Care | 2013-2017 |
| 3.9 Investigate opportunities to strengthen Graduate Programs in Maternal and Child Health and Long Day Care to address ongoing workforce issues including an ageing workforce and staff retention | 80% of graduate MCH Nurses and Childcare Workers remain in the sector workforce | • Maternal and Child Health and Immunisation  
• Long Day Care and Family Day Care | 2013-2017 |
| 3.10 Develop partnerships to address the lack of Vacation Care programs that provide respite for children with disabilities who have high and complex support needs | • Funding opportunities identified  
• Program options explored | School Aged Care Services | 2013-2017 |
| 3.11 Support and promote inclusive interest based arts and cultural, and recreational activities | • Provide Children’s Week Grants program  
• Range of activities and events promoted | Family and Children’s Services Quality and Development | 2013-2017 |
| 3.12 Investigate the feasibility of expanding School Aged Child Care Services that respond to identified service needs | • Primary Schools and Families Surveyed | School Aged Care Services | 2013 |
| 3.13 Strengthen early years participation and transition between early years education and care services and primary school to enhance positive outcomes for children | • Partners identified  
• Networking opportunities explored  
• Develop Early Years Participation Place Based Groups | • School Aged Care Services  
• Family and Children’s Services Quality and Development  
• Long Day Care and Family Day Care  
• Maternal and Child Health and Immunisation | 2013-2017 |
| 3.14 Identify and provide advocacy in relation to new and emerging issues and as well as apply for additional funding from State and Federal Governments to expand or develop activities and programs. | • Advocacy actions taken  
• Funding opportunities identified and applications submitted | Family, Youth and Children’s Services | 2013-2017 |
| 3.15 Work collaboratively and advocate with family and children’s service providers, and health services to identify and address service system gaps eg. Mental Health issue in children | • Family and Children’s Services Partnership model reviewed  
• Regular networking opportunities provided  
• Partnerships identified | Family, Youth and Children’s Services | 2013-2017 |
Appendix 1 –

Acronyms and Definitions

ACECQA  Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority
AEDI   Australian Early Development Index
CALD   Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CAMHS  Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
Child FIRST Family Information Referral and Support Team
CMP    Coastal Management Plan
CAP    Coastal Action Plan
COAG   Council of Australian Governments
CUES   Communication, Understanding, Education and Support for Early Parenting
DAP    Disability Action Plan
DDA    Disability Discrimination Act
DEECD  Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
ECEC   Early Childhood Education and Care
ECIS   Early Childhood Intervention Services
EHLS   Early Home Learning Study
EYLF   Early Years Learning Framework
KF&CS  Kingston Family and Children’s Strategy
Family Life Facilitating agency for Child FIRST in the Inner Middle Catchments
KFCSP  Kingston Family and Children Services Partnership
MAY    Municipal Association Victoria
MCAP   Multicultural Action Plan
MCH    Maternal and Child Health Service
MEYP   Municipal Early Years Plan
NECDs  National Early Childhood Development Strategy
NQF    National Quality Framework
OECD   Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PH&WBP Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
PND    Post Natal Depression
TAB    Take a Break
UNCRC  United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
VEYLDF Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework
VLG Report Victorian Local Government Support for Children, Young People and Their Families report
F&CS   Family and Children's Strategy

Appendix 2:

Current Child and Family Service provision in Kingston – Service System Relationship

UNIVERSAL SERVICES
Client Group – All families/children for example, Maternal and Child Health, Kindergarten, Child Care, School and Parent Education

SECONDARY SERVICES
Client Group – Families/children with additional needs for example, Early Intervention, Family Counselling, Disability Services, Community Health

TERTIARY SERVICES
Client Group – Families/children whose special needs require intensive or ongoing intervention for example, Hospitals, Child Protection and Drug and Alcohol
For more information

📞 1300 653 356
or visit the website
✉️ www.kingston.vic.gov.au