

**Senate Community Affairs Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
**SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO**  
**2016-2017 Additional Estimates Hearings**

**Outcome Number: 2.1 Families and Communities**

**Question No: SQ17-000197**

**Topic: Communities for Children**

**Hansard page: Written**

**Senator Louise Pratt asked:**

What work has the department undertaken in respect to the outcomes and effectiveness of the communities for children program? Please outline progress of outcomes under this program.

**Answer:**

Communities for Children Facilitating Partners (CfC FPs) use a whole-of-community approach to support wellbeing for children from birth to 12 years in 52 sites across Australia. A Facilitating Partner (FP) in each site maintains a Committee of community representatives which helps the FP to decide which services to fund, such as parenting support, playgroups and home visiting services. The providers who are funded to deliver the services are known as Community Partners.

Two phases of impact evaluation have been conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) for the CfC FP program to longitudinally assess its effect on child, parent and community outcomes. Findings from the evaluation suggested there were some positive outcomes from the program during Phase 1 (2006 to 2008), particularly in relation to parenting behaviours, but most were not durable and faded out by the time children started school in Phase 2 (2010 to 2012).

The Department considered the results of these evaluations in making adjustments to new CfC FP grant agreements in 2014-15 to improve results for children and families. The main change was the introduction of a requirement that by 1 July 2015 CfC FPs must use at least 30 per cent of the funding for direct service delivery to purchase evidence-based programs, increasing to 50 per cent by 1 July 2017.

In 2016, the Department procured research to survey and interview CfC FPs and their Community Partners about the progress of the reforms to CfC FP grant agreements. The final report from this research was provided to the Department in November 2016. The research found that CfC FPs were generally supportive of, and tracking well with, the reforms. The Department is currently considering the recommendations of the report and it is anticipated that key learnings and the Department's response to the review will be shared with the sector in the near future.

In addition, organisations delivering CfC FP began utilising the Data Exchange (DEX) in 2014-15. DEX is the program performance reporting solution developed by the Department. DEX uses de-identified data to look at both short and long term outcomes achieved for clients across a broad suite of programs, and as more of this data is collected over time the Department will have a growing evidence base on service patterns and outcomes under this program, which will complement formal evaluations.