

Cognition Education Trust

Report

March 2020

Cognition Education Trust provided \$35,000 (Inc GST) towards our project First 1000 Days: From Thought to Action.

The funds were used to deliver our programme to families experiencing adverse circumstances in Northland and South Auckland.

One of the things we were able to do thanks to the CET donation was to complete the video we mentioned in our application. You can find it on our website or click here:

<https://youtu.be/9VVbNSCGNrK>

The programme was delivered to these high need families from the third trimester of pregnancy to three years of age. Maori, Pacific and new migrant families were particularly targeted for participation through our partner agencies. The programme focussed on encouraging and teaching parents to bond, read, talk, sing and fully engage with their children. They were given books, resources, support and information to develop confidence and parenting skills critical in the child's early years, to provide a better future for their children and reduce disparities in social outcomes.

We partnered with a number of community agencies to ensure that we achieved the highest possible number of eligible participating families. We also formed an alliance with Talking Matters and Brainwave Trust including jointly delivering a training workshop in Northland for agencies engaging with high need families.

Impact

In Northland we had 573 families participate in the extended First 1000 Days programme and 623 in Books for Babies – a total of 1196.

In South Auckland we had 520 families participate in the extended First 1000 Days programme and 1139 in Books for Babies – a total of 2798.

So, the total number of families that benefited was 3994 across the two regions.

We refer to "Books for Babies" but our programmes are not so much about books but about improving attachment and parental confidence. Simply gifting books does not provide parents with the knowledge required to understand what is happening to baby's brain and how a parent can positively impact on their baby's development.

We targeted the most vulnerable families with babies and young children. Each family receives books and resources as well as the all-important supporting key messages.

Among the resources is a fridge magnet to remind families of the importance of reading to a child as well as a scrapbook with crayons, pencils, etc., a set of placemats (again with key messages including in te reo and Pacific languages) and of course books that are age appropriate in several languages.

Mothers participating in the latter stages of pregnancy receive a beautiful Hairy Maclary book and an ages and stages brochure, and are encouraged to read to their baby even before baby is born. Mothers are also informed as to how they can receive well child/tamariki ora services and enrol with Books for Babies.

In the South Auckland programme most families are from Manukau and Māngere that are the heart of Auckland's south, home to the largest Polynesian community in the world. The area is also one of the most deprived.

The overall proportion of Māori in the CMDHB was 15.5%, which was close to the national proportion of 14.9%. The proportion of Māori was greatest in Pukekohe (71.4%), followed by Papakura (59.2%).

The proportion of Pacific ethnicity in the CMDHB was 23.8%, which is approximately three times greater than the national proportion of 7.3%.

The Northland population is in the region of 188,700 people with 68,500 in the Far North. Of this population Māori make up around 64,458 people and Pacific peoples 7,542.

The area is highly rural and has a high number of the population with low levels of income.

We provide ongoing support to our partner agencies such as tamariki ora, Plunket and Family Start.

Benefit to CET

There is a high level of compatibility between the mission of Storytime Foundation (SFT) and that of Cognition Education Trust (CET)

SFT Mission

Storytime Foundation is committed, in partnership with Plunket, Tamariki Ora providers, libraries and others to building the ongoing wellbeing of children and their families by increasing bonding through reading.

CET Mission

Our mission is to improve the opportunities and lives of our children and young people who are the future stewards of Aotearoa- New Zealand's social and economic well-being.

We invest in projects and research to help our children and young people develop the capabilities and competencies for successful living and lifelong learning, address educational inequalities and increase teacher effectiveness.

The objectives of Storytime Foundation are to:

- Improve the wellbeing of children in Aotearoa New Zealand with emphasis on the most vulnerable
- Engage with agencies that deliver services directly into the homes of vulnerable families and work collaboratively with them to develop parental ability to raise children in supportive home environments
- Deliver Early Reading Together and Reading Together programmes and supporting activities to prison inmates and those released into the community with a view to improving parent-child attachment and reducing recidivism

- Work towards increasing parental competence to achieve improved educational outcomes for children, starting in the early years

Where to from here?

Our intention is to continue to expand “Books for Babies: The First 1000 Days”, across both South Auckland and Northland and to increase participation across both regions. This involves working with parents from the third trimester until the child is 3 years of age. This will not only provide books and resources but will aim to extend the quality time spent with parents and the level of education that parents can receive from frontline workers in the home. It also expands the number and type of agencies that we can work with.

We will also expand on the 2019/20 piloted initiative Taonga mō ngā Tamariki, a programme that includes Early Reading Together (ERT) and Reading Together (RT). Again, the focus is on improving the relationship between parent and child (in this case an incarcerated parent) and improving parental confidence and competence. The programme is supported by NZ Dept of Corrections and Ministry of Education. We will be working in both Kaikohe and Wiri and hope to expand to other sites in South Auckland and elsewhere this coming year.

We are due to deliver additional training to frontline workers in 2020 based on very successful workshops held in both Northland and the Bay of Plenty.

We have formed strong relationships with paediatricians in some communities and intend to continue to grow such relationships across NZ. Dr Johan Morreau has previously presented at our workshops and has committed to doing so again this year.

Sustainability

As a charity we are generally dependent upon the generosity and support of philanthropic trusts, societies and individuals.

Over the past two years we have received support from our first corporate sponsor and hope to grow this relationship. However, we will continue to engage with the corporate sector to attract sponsorship. This year we completed an animated video (available on our website) which we intend to use to illustrate what work we do, why we do it and what the results are.

We have been very grateful to CET for their support and hope that we can continue with this relationship.

Lessons learned

Families in the target area are particularly vulnerable. We are reaching some 4000 families each year in Northland and South Auckland but there are other families that we could deliver to. In 2020 we will be working closely with Plunket, Papakura Marae, Raukura Hauora o Tainui, Family Success Matters, Te Matariki Clendon Library, Ngati Hine, Ngapuhi, Hokianga Health Trust, Te Hiku Hauora, Te Ha Oranga, Kaikohe Library and many others to increase the number of families we deliver to.

Expansion takes time and we want to grow to engage with more families, but at a pace that we can sustain.

Evaluation/Feedback

We receive feedback from parents and from agency frontline staff and additionally we have a formal evaluation form that parents are asked to complete independently and return to us (the rate of return is, however, low). This mechanism and a plethora of research informs us that this is an excellent way in which to improve attachment and parental confidence and increase literacy levels in the early years. These are the key outcomes the programme targets although the other outcomes including health outcomes are also important.

A comprehensive evaluation and review of Books for Babies: First 1000 Days and our prison initiative Taonga mō ngā Tamariki is currently being undertaken by Point Research. This evaluation is dependent on data and we are working with our provider partners to increase the evaluation form returns. In addition, Point Research is interviewing focus groups and individual families as well as inmates, families and staff at both Auckland Women's and Northern Region Correction Facility (please note that this has been discontinued during the current COVID 19 lockdown).

A previous evaluation involving STF families found that parents valued the programme and read more to their child, had more books in the home and were more confident as parents.

We look forward to the comprehensive evaluation report scheduled to be available later this year.

A significant outcome for us this year has been the continued involvement of additional agencies associated with the Books for Babies: First 1000 Days programme, an expansion which adds significant value to our work; and the feedback from these additional agencies is highly valued.

One of the greatest benefits from regularly reading to a child is the development of executive function which is critical later in life for good decision making. Executive function and self-regulation skills are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully. Just as an air traffic control system at a busy airport safely manages the arrivals and departures of many aircraft on multiple runways, the brain needs this skill set to filter distractions, prioritize tasks, set and achieve goals, and control impulses.

When children have opportunities to develop executive function and self-regulation skills, individuals and society experience lifelong benefits. These skills are crucial for learning and development. They also enable positive behaviour.

Families engage very well with the programme and eagerly await the next visit and the accompanying books and resources. We know that where we have been a little late with getting the next package to a family, they are quick to criticise! We try hard not to be late!!

The feedback is such that we understand that families, nurses, community workers and midwives recommend that other families participate.

Conclusion

Through this generous donation we have been able to deliver to 3994 vulnerable families across Northland and South Auckland- this will include over 8000 individuals. Families have received books and a range of resources to use with their children, but more importantly parents are more aware of the impact they can have on their child's development, have increased capacity to positively impact that development and recognise the importance of reading talking, singing and engaging with their child from the earliest opportunity.

Given the demographic, this programme is reaching some of New Zealand's most vulnerable families.

Thank you.

Tony Culliney
Chief Executive