

Case Study

George Town Community Hub

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Case Study 5: George Town Community Hub



Tasmania, Australia

Overview

George Town is a rapidly growing community within Tasmania. The community is relatively disadvantaged, with high unemployment and low levels of education and adult literacy². Previous models of siloed service delivery were ineffective at addressing these issues, which drove the need for a new model.

The George Town Community Hub was established in 2014, offering a new model of service delivery whereby multiple services were strategically collocated to act as a one-stop-shop, providing a range of holistic services and support for children and families.



Source: ARTAS

Context/setting



Service mix



Education, including Learning and Information Network Centre (LINC), activities for preschool children and school children^{1,2}

Community infrastructure, including a library, public meeting rooms and spaces to study²

Community services, including Service Tasmania and Child and Family Centres (CFC)^{1,2}

Level of integration

Service integration is evident between the LINC and CFC, with shared spaces, resources, staff and skills. There are fewer opportunities for service integration with Service Tasmania given their transactional nature. However, there is still a sense of collegiality among all the services, and the collocation of Service Tasmania provides an opportunity for increased awareness of, and access to, other services

Site characteristics



Greenfield, purpose built facilities were constructed on Regents Square², adjacent to an existing memorial hall²

Urban

Funding



Public, funding sourced from the capital investment program – LINC and CFC funding²

Partners (inc. lead agency)

Lead agency: Department of Education (Tasmania)

Partners: Service Tasmania

Foundations for success

This hub exhibits two key success factors that were identified in the literature review.



Collaborative and detailed planning



Governance and culture

Collaborative and detailed planning

Planning and consultation was undertaken with the community, which included engaging with the 'Local Enabling Group'. This is comprised of members of the community, members of Gateway, Anglicare, and representatives from the Department of Education and local schools^{2,3}. This allowed for active engagement of the community in the planning stage, allowing them to have their voice heard and shape the facility and service design.

The hub is located in the town centre and in close proximity to a shopping centre and public transport, as well as a range of other services including doctors, pharmacies, supermarkets and banks².

Governance and culture

In recognition of the governance challenges of collaboration, the Community Services Hubs Board was established to oversee the process. This is comprised of representatives from the service providers, along with representatives from the Department of Premier and Cabinet².

In addition, the 'Early Years Collective' was established, which meets weekly with a specific focus on outreach and pathways. This group is comprised of representatives across multiple partners including the CFC, school, child care and others.

Outcomes

Reduced operating costs

An inquiry into Tasmanian Child and Family Centres found that the George Town Child and Family Centre had slightly lower than average operating costs (compared to other Child and Family Centres in Tasmania) as a result of being collocated with the LINC and sharing facilities⁴.

Service awareness and access

Library membership has increased by approximately 800 people since the hub opened compared with the previous library location. This is reported to increase the opportunity for the community to become aware of and connect with adjacent services that were previously located elsewhere and had some barriers to access. Staff also worked together to develop an outreach strategy, identifying and engaging with families who would benefit from accessing services. This approach has connected approximately 50 more families and 100 more children to services, with varying levels of engagement.

Community networks, cohesion and engagement

It was acknowledged that the hub is having a positive impact on vulnerable and socially isolated populations through providing a safe and welcoming place. Despite being focussed more on younger families and their children, there has been an observed increase in engagement from older members of the community, using the library services and attending the hub with grandchildren, with anecdotal reports of reducing social isolation of these members of the community.

Lessons

- Facility and service design was developed in collaboration with the community, which allowed it to be tailored to the community's specific needs
- The hub was strategically located in close proximity to public transport and shops, which contributed to the success through increasing accessibility for community members
- Having a single manager responsible for overseeing the delivery of multiple services helps drive integrative efforts, and this was evident in the case of the LINC and CFC, where it was identified that having a single manager enabled integration. Following the success of this approach, a neighbouring hub located in Queenstown adapted their model to have a single manager.
- Establishing the hub on greenfield site allowed agencies more flexibility to tailor the design of the facility and services to the specific community needs.
- Having the time and opportunity to extensively plan and build relationships with partners prior to the operations phase was identified as an important factor in ensuring a smooth transition from the old, siloed model, to a new, more collaborative way of delivering services
- Ensuring that new and existing staff have a shared understanding of the vision is important to drive integration
- Collaboration with other services or organisations in the community, such as schools, through the Early Years Collective, has ensured clear and consistent messaging to families regarding the suite of services and events offered
- Operational efficiencies can be achieved through shared contracts for energy, cleaning, staffing, along with avoided duplication of generic services

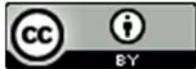
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1. ARTAS, 2017, George Town Community Hub, <http://artas.com.au/project/george-town-community-hub/>
2. Department of Education, 2013, George Town Hub, SUBMISSION TO THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS
3. Parliament of Tasmania, 2013, George Town Hub, <http://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/ctee/Joint/Reports/George%20Town%20Hub.pdf>
4. Tasmanian Government, 2017, Whole of Government submission to the legislative council select committee inquiry into Tasmanian child and family centres

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