



Hobsons Bay
CITY COUNCIL

Hobsons Bay City Council Submission to Healthy Together Victoria: Grow Learn Live Well

DECEMBER 2013



Introduction

Hobsons Bay City Council (the Council) is pleased to see that the Department of Health has developed 'Grow Learn Live Well' to promote the health of Victoria's children and young people and set the direction for health promotion in Victoria. Below is the Council's response to this consultation paper.

Hobsons Bay City Council is situated approximately seven to 20 kilometres south west of the Central Business District (CBD), covering an area of 66 square kilometres. The municipality has a population of 87 360 people which is forecast to increase by 17 per cent (14 864) by 2031.

Children and young people make up approximately 25 per cent of the Hobsons Bay population. The Council is aware that addressing the health needs of children and young people is vitally important and different to addressing the health needs of adults.

The Council is currently developing a new Children and Young Peoples Plan 2014-2018 and in recent consultation with children and young people predominant key themes were: lack of health services in the municipality, especially mental health services, public transport options, recreational activities and spaces to connect with their community, as well as education and employment opportunities.

Children and Young People in Hobsons Bay

The Council's directions are driven by the Hobsons Bay Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013-2017 (the Council's Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan) and the Council Plan 2013-2017. Children and young people are a key priority area within the Community Health and Wellbeing Plan therefore in addition to this there are a number of organisational policies that directly target opportunities for children and young people, including the Children and Young People's Plan 2014 – 2018 (under development) which is replacing the current Children's Plan 2009 – 2013 and Youth Strategic Plan 2009 – 2013. The Open Space Strategy (under development) and the Play Space Strategy 2013 – 2023 are also key policies for this population group.

The Children and Young Peoples Plan 2014-2018 is currently under development. This plan will be underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This enables the Council to ensure appropriate methods and strategies are included in the plan, strengthening its ability to align with the needs of children and young people.

Grow Learn Live Well

The Grow Learn Live Well policy needs to be the prevention and health promotion policy platform that can provide the Council with a direction for collaborative action for children and young people. As a health promotion policy this should provide a position on the social determinants of health and their influence on the health and wellbeing of children and young people. The policy should also enable partnerships, advocacy and action in integrated transport, access to children and youth appropriate health services, education and learning opportunities, access to employment, income, and stable housing for themselves and their families.

At present Grow Learn Live Well addresses primary prevention as the focus of the document however throughout the document it takes a downstream approach looking at individual lifestyle factors and illness rather than the social determinants of health. Health promotion principles clearly state that in order to create improvements in population health and wellbeing; these determinants need to be addressed.

The gaps identified by the Council in 'Grow Learn Live Well' are outlined below:

Age range

The age range identified for the policy is 0 to 18 years. Whilst this is appropriate for children, evidence shows that young people up to 25 years of age are still developing, and require support, particularly around education and employment. Extending the age range of this policy to 0 to 25 years of age will allow alignment with state policies such as 'Engage Involve Create' and best practice models for improving opportunities for children and young people.

The policy needs to outline an age breakdown, with the recognition that the health needs of those zero to two year olds are significantly different to the health needs of those 12 to 15 years of age and beyond.

At present the policy outline is dominated by the needs of children. This needs to be balance with specific reference to the needs of young people. The policy also does not address mental health issues in young people beyond 12 years of age (adolescence is a critical time where mental health problems may surface) and makes no reference to the sexual health of young people or other determinants of health such as access to education, transport, secure housing, and employment opportunities, all of which ensure sustainable wellbeing throughout adulthood.

Family and carers also need to be included within the policy, acknowledging that they play a vital role in enabling the health and wellbeing needs of children and young people. This should also include elements such as supporting parents and carers with secure and affordable housing, employment, food security, and transport.

Partners, stakeholders and their roles

The policy makes no reference to the role children and young people have in shaping their own futures. Children and young people themselves need to be recognised as key partners and stakeholders and outlined in the policy. A needs assessment and ongoing consultation should be held with children and young people to ensure this policy is addressing their needs.

The policy seems to be a collaboration between the Department of Health and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. To promote the health and wellbeing of children and young people, and influence the broader social determinants of health, it is essential that other state government departments are also involved. A comprehensive list of partners needs to be established which include transport, housing, employment, business, general practitioners, allied health services and settlement services. The role of each partner also needs to be outlined, and their capacity to collaboratively contribute to this policy.

Reform area three, Government and partners refers to 'coordination' of partners. This should be replaced with 'collaboration' allowing for stronger buy in from partners and a better reflection on the content of the full document.

For all local government areas in Victoria there needs to be a baseline for Grow Learn Live Well in order to measure the impact of the policy. The policy suggests this could be achieved through the

Healthy Together Victoria projects; however these are currently only implemented in 14 sites across Victoria.

Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of Grow Learn Live Well is for children and young people to experience optimal physical health and wellbeing and social and emotional development. The policy needs to further unpack what they mean by this and how this will be addressed via the three reform areas.

The vital role of integrated transport is missing from this document. Even if services exist, if integrated transport is not available, the accessibility of health services (such as doctors), recreational facilities, education, employment, and community connections cannot be achieved. As stated earlier, this policy needs to take a more upstream health promotion approach, inclusive of the social determinants of health.

The policy makes little reference to recreational opportunities, both active and passive, including the built environment, sports clubs, parks and the importance of shared bike and walking trails. One of the key areas within the policy is to improve physical activity, which cannot be done without children and young people having access to appropriate infrastructure.

As mentioned earlier the policy takes a very individual and lifestyle approach. When considering, elements such as nutrition, food security needs to be addressed ensuring all people are able to access nutritionally adequate, culturally acceptable, safe foods regularly from non-emergency sources.

The policy takes a broad approach to children and young people. An equity and gender lens needs to be applied to the policy to ensure we close the gap between community groups and the needs of those most disadvantaged and at risk are addressed equitably.

The policy looks at taking a settings based approach to health promotion. Again this is working at a midstream level in health promotion terms, and the state government should be working at the upstream determinants level as this is where they are best placed to have influence. Community organisations, who are closest to the community, are best placed to take a settings approach, if appropriately resourced.

The policy alludes to the need to create sustainable health promoting environments for children, young people and families, however further clarification is needed around how this is intended to occur.

The policy does not articulate other key state government policies such as Plan Melbourne and local policies such as Municipal Strategic Statements, Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans, and Council Plans. To ensure the principles within this policy are embedded within these key documents the policy should articulate how children and young people could be included.

Currently the Council, along with community organisations, are implementing many initiatives for children and young people and some services are already at their capacity. The policy does not mention resources needed or required in order to implement the plan, nor how the plan will be monitored and evaluated. This needs to be articulated in order to understand what is required of partnerships.



Conclusion

The Council believes that there is a need for the state government to set the direction for children and young people and take a health promotion and prevention approach, however further work is needed in the current suggested policy direction to ensure sustainable population health changes. The Council looks forward to working further with the state government to develop the implementation strategy for this policy and explore how further upstream, social determinants of health approaches can be achieved to enable health and wellbeing for all Victorian children and young people.