

Family by Family: A co-designed & co-produced family support model

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Families are stressed. When we ran a stall in front of supermarkets, shopping centres, and on street corners to ask South Australian families about stress, hundreds stopped to talk. Every family spoke about the multiple stressors they lived with - time, money, relationships, kids behaviour, housework, health, and school made the top of the list. Statistics tell us that 91% of Australians are stressed by at least one area of their life (Lifeline Australia, 2008). We quickly learnt that whilst all families could name everyday stressors, what differentiated families were the types of stressors experienced and the resources available to cope and act.

Resources are not just financial. They include the assets *interna*/to a family - like motivation, optimism, communication, problem-solving - and the assets *externa*/to a family - like informal support, information, and services (Berry, 1997). Resources build on each other. Good friends and neighbours can help us to feel more motivated and optimistic. Good communication skills can help us to access the right kind of information and services. Where do families acquire the resources to move through stress and towards what they want?

There are fewer places to acquire these resources than in the past. Social capital refers to the resources that come from our relationships with trusted others - be it family, friends, neighbours, communities, or services (Crosone, 2004). New research indicates that social capital in Australia is on the decline (Leigh, 2010).

Without social capital to draw on, stress can easily build. Froma Walsh, who writes about resilient families, notes that, "A pile-up of internal and external stressors can overwhelm the family, heightening vulnerability and the risk of subsequent problems...These stresses can derail the functioning of a family system, with ripple effects to all members and their relationships (2003, p.3-4)."

The ripple effects include mental illness, family breakdown, domestic violence, child neglect and abuse. These crises trigger a statutory state response, even as state crisis services struggle to cope with rising demand. Last year in South Australia, 20,298 children came to the attention of child protection services. Nearly 5000 cases were actioned, while many received minimal state response (AIWH, 2001).

Even if crisis services could cope with such high demand, a crisis response is rarely the best response *for families*. The statutory child protection system has been designed to manage immediate risk *to children* (Lamont and Bromfield, 2010). Their tools are coercive: investigations, assessments, and court orders. Yet, the research tells us that services work best for families when they engage rather than compel families to take part; when they maximise families' choice; when they focus on families' strengths rather than deficits; and when they recognise different cultures and value sets (Arney and Scott, 2010). Indeed, 'helpful services' challenge traditional notions of professional-client relationships. As researchers Miranda Roe and Anne Morris write, "In contrast to widely-held practice ideas about the importance of professional distance to ensure objectivity and discourage dependence, women place a high value on having a close relationship, akin to a feeling of friendship, with their workers (2004, p.6).

The costs of ineffective interventions are high. Every year in Australia about \$1,944m is spent addressing the long-term impact of child abuse and neglect: including \$976.9m on adult criminality; \$288.57m on juvenile delinquency; and \$335m on mental health services (Valentine and Katz, 2007). We need a radically different way of keeping families from interfacing with crisis services, and preventing re-entry of families who have had contact with crisis services.

Family by Family is a new model of family support designed with families to address the problem of too much demand on crisis services, and too few families with the supports to manage chronic stress and isolation. Given the opportunity, families do not just want to survive.

Families want to thrive. Thriving families look beyond today; they have a sense of direction, aspirations for the future, and ideas of how to get there. These families are open to experiencing new and different in order to create change.

We learned the meaning of thriving from families. Over a 12-month period, we spent time with 100 South Australian families to experience the ups and downs of family life, and to co-develop & prototype the concept & interactions behind Family by Family. Family by Family offers a new kind of support: support delivered by, with, and between whole families. It finds, trains, and resources families who have overcome tough times and connects them with families who want things to change. Professionals serve as coaches, brokering families to each other, rather than directly delivering services. For 12 weeks, we tested and improved the model with 20 families. Families who took part experienced shifts in family goals, attitudes, behaviours and social networks.

Family by Family demonstrates a new way to engage families in both the design and delivery of human services. It is an example of a co-designed and co-produced solution: a solution that recognises people as assets, builds on their existing capabilities, establishes mutual responsibilities between professionals and people, and supports people to help themselves (Boyle, Slay, Stephens, 2010). Throughout this chapter we will explore the Family by Family model and methodology, providing stories and examples from the families who took part in the prototype.

The Model

Family by Family started with the brief: how can we enable more families to thrive, and fewer families to come into contact with crisis services?

Thriving as the outcome

Ethnographic research with 35 families led us to identify and define family thriving as the primary outcome measure. Every family we met experienced chaos and stress, yet some families were still moving towards the lives they wanted. In our words, they were thriving. Thriving families tried new things, set goals for the future, brokered family members to new opportunities outside the house, and gave and received positive feedback (Lockett, et al., 2010).

Behavioural modelling as the lever

Co-design work with 30 families helped us test how to enable families to adopt thriving behaviours and build the necessary support networks. Families described learning by doing, yet we observed few opportunities for whole families to see and try new ways of doing family. Family by Family brings whole families together to see and learn from each other. Families who have been through times (sharing families) are trained and supported to link-up with families who want things to change (seeking families). Sharing and seeking families link-up for 10-30 weeks. Link-ups serve as a vehicle for family led change: sharing families model thriving behaviors and connect seeking families to new community resources.

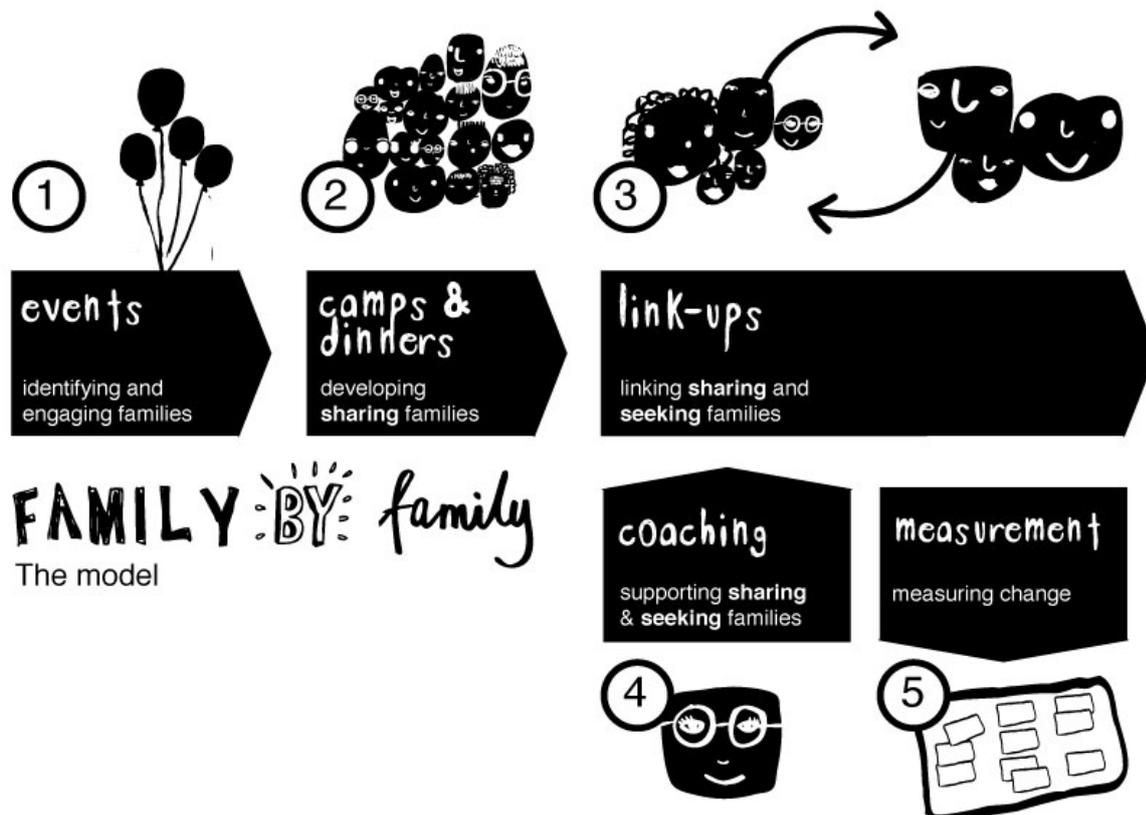
Implementing evidence-based practice

What works for families in Family by Family aligns with the literature on effective family interventions. Effective family interventions emphasise family strengths, resilience, and protective processes rather than deficits (Kumpfer and Alvarado 2003). Thriving behaviours and social connectedness are important protective factors for averting and overcoming traumatic life events (Lang, et al., 2003). Evidence-based strategies for helping families overcome trauma include: planning and doing positive activities, developing skills for managing distressing situations, developing helpful thinking, building problem-solving skills, and developing supportive connections (Bromfield et al., 2010, p.19). Family by Family puts these evidence-based strategies into practice. The focus is not only on enabling families to rebound from tough times - what is commonly referred to as resilience - but enabling families to plan and take steps towards the future.

Complementing community development & professional services

Family by Family implements evidence-based practice using whole families rather than professionals as the delivery agent. Sharing families are trained and supported to use their own stories, strategies, and connections to help seeking families identify & move towards their goals. Seeking families choose what they want to change. Family by Family occupies a new kind of intervention space: one that blends the behaviour change focus of professional services with the informality and universality of community development. Families, rather than parents or children, are the focal point of the intervention.

Fig. 2-1 The Family by Family Model



The Experience

Family by Family has been co-designed at a conceptual and an interaction level. Where the conceptual level outlines the outcomes (e.g. thriving) and the activities (e.g. link-ups), the interaction level looks at how families engage with each component of the activities: the materials, the offer, the roles, the training, the tools, etc. Family by Family consists of five types of activities: (1) identifying & engaging families; (2) developing sharing families; (3) linking sharing and seeking families; (4) supporting seeking and sharing families; and (5) measuring change. We describe how these activities played out during the 12-week prototype, below. Films and further documentation from the prototype can be found online: www.tacsi.org.au/designpapers.

Finding & Engaging Families

Family by Family finds & meets families in places that are already part of the family routine. We run pop-up stalls in supermarkets, malls, fast food restaurants, parks, and even on the street to meet two kinds of families: those who want something to change and those who want to share their stories and strategies to enable other families to change. Pop-up stalls feature fun, developmental activities for families taught by other families, like origami, filipino games, kite making, gingerbread decorating, and paper aeroplane folding.

The message to families comes from families: "We're a group of families who are about more good stuff for families. We link up families with stuff in common to change the things they want to change - like kids behaviour or going out more as a family. We're not government. We're not religious. We're not political."

The materials feature families: We show families what it looks like to engage in Family by Family and how Family by Family feels different to traditional services using photos, film, and family stories.

Family by Family also works with schools, children's centres, and targeted services to let families know about the Family by Family offer. The goal is to attract and engage families - not to offer them another referral. We provide materials, a website, and coaching to service providers so that families want to opt-in.

Training Sharing Families

Families are Family by Family's biggest resource. We hire and train families who have come through tough times, now live a life with more ups than downs, and want to share their stories and strategies with others. Once we meet potential sharing families at pop-up stalls and through services, we bring by a take-away dinner and use purpose designed games with the whole family to explore the sharing family role. If families feel that being a sharing family fits with their life, we pair them with a buddy sharing family and invite them along to a weekly sharing family dinner.

The prototype taught us what makes an effective sharing family. Effective sharing families have the time and space to work with other families, and demonstrate or learn these strengths:

- Building influential relationships with other families, even those who they may not like.
- Modelling thriving behaviours and sharing personal strategies and stories.
- Focusing in on change.
- Brokering families with useful people and places in the local community.

Families who are a good fit for the sharing family role are invited to a 2.5 day training camp. Here, the whole family learns new skills for working with other families. The focus is not just on sharing stories and strategies, but on enabling change. We draw on storytelling, life coaching, personal training, and behaviour change methods.

Being a change enabler is a new, and sometimes uncomfortable role for families. It is more than a friend or volunteer helper. We provide a grant to sharing families, whilst they are in a link-up, to recognise the intensity of the role. Sharing families can choose how to invest their grant: towards link-up activities, their own families, or in growing Family by Family. This flexible system allows families to volunteer by investing their full grant back into Family by Family whilst also enabling families in need of financial assistance to draw payment without stigma.

Linking-up Families

Family by Family brings together trained sharing families with families who want something to change. Families who want something to change are called seeking families. A seeking-sharing family pair is called a link-up. Link-ups start by matching families. Seeking and sharing families create a profile of their family. Profiles use photographs, quotes and stories from families rather than a more professional and standardised assessment. Families talk about their interests, hobbies, and aspirations for the future. Seeking families choose which sharing families they would like to meet.

A Family by Family coach facilitates the first meeting between seeking and sharing families to establish the focus of the link-up, and brainstorm what families might do together to further their goals. Goals include: going out more as a family, meeting good people, dealing with kids' problem behaviours or learning more about Australian culture.

Over an initial 10-week period, families do intentional activities together. Examples include barbecues, community outings, and playing games at home. Through these activities, sharing families can model their interactions & behaviours, share their own stories & strategies, and enable seeking families to see & experience different ways of doing. By the end of the link-up, we aim to help families move towards

their goals and broker them to the people and places that continue their forward momentum. Helping families 'do without' their sharing family is a critical part of long-term change.

The length of a link-up is flexible, and based on what will enable the most change for families. Seeking families with big stories and a history of significant trauma could benefit from a second or even third 10-week link-up. We know from the literature that the most intensive home visiting programs involve around 100 hours of intervention - which is the amount that a 30-week link-up enables (Valentine and Katz, 2007, p.15).

Supporting Link-Ups

Family by Family emphasises family-led change. Behavioural change is rarely a linear process, and requires external ideas, motivational support, repetition and troubleshooting. The Family by Family coach is a new professional role designed to motivate families, generate ideas, provide emotional support, and step-in if families come across problems that is beyond their scope to solve. The coach is available at any time to intervene or provide additional support to families.

Coaches meet with sharing families 1:1 every week to debrief, re-focus the link-up on measurable change, and brainstorm ideas and activities. Coaches also check-in with seeking families half-way through the linkup to see how things are progressing and then to facilitate a joint coaching session to inspire families to keep moving forward. At the end of the link-up, the coach runs a joint wrap-up session to help recognise and celebrate change, to record change, and set future goals.

During the prototype, professionals found the coaching role to be new and, at times, uncomfortable. Professionals move from being direct service providers to behind-the-scenes facilitators. We've found that the best coaches are from a diverse range of disciplines - from social work to life coaching to personal training - and are able to motivate families by drawing ideas & methods from their professional and personal lives.

Family by Family intentionally blurs the professional-personal divide. We recognise the value of professional knowledge and practice alongside the expertise of families. We bring together all of our sharing families and coaches every week for a 'yarn over dinner' to exchange link-up experiences and learn from each other. Yarns are whole family spaces, where kids and adults find new ways to support seeking families to change.

Measuring Change

Family by Family works to create and measure four kinds of change with and for seeking and sharing families:

- A change in family goals
- A change in family attitudes
- A change in family behaviours
- An increase in the number and quality of social connections

Families sign-up to Family by Family to work on a particular goal, but through their interactions, often shift their goals and sense of possibility. In the prototype, we found that most families went from feeling alone and disempowered to feeling supported and in control. Through their link-ups, they visited new places, spent time with new people, and established new family routines.

Family by Family also measures changes in sharing families, including an increase in:

- Job readiness
- Family income

We use a series of tools to help families identify what they want to change, and to track those changes over time. Families measure change at three points in time: the first meeting, the mid-point coaching session, and the wrap-up coaching session. We co-designed a tool called 'the bubble diagram' to help coaches help families map what they want to change; what they have to 'do, say and think' to get to that change; and what that change will enable.

Families also use a series of sticker sheets to capture shifts in attitudes and behaviours, along with a link-up album to record meaningful quotes, anecdotes, and photos. Both kids and adults take part in reflecting on change. Our aim is to prompt seeking families to continue changing, and to re-engage them as sharing families.

Family by Family uses evaluation as a motivational tool, rather than an accountability tool. We're interested in learning what does and doesn't work for families as we go along so that we can rapidly iterate better ways to enable change. This is in line with the goals of developmental evaluation (Gamble, 2008).

Who do we recruit

Family by Family has been designed with and for *all* families. There are no eligibility criteria or risk thresholds. Yet not all families engage with Family by Family for the same reasons. Rather than group families according to professionally assessed risks or needs, we group families by their motivations and goals. Such user-facing segmentations allow for more systematic adaptation of experiences and interactions. Five types of families have been attracted to Family by Family: families who are stuck, families in and out of crisis, families moving on, families wanting more, and families wanting to share.

Stuck families

Families that are stuck live in constant stress. Things are consistently tough: the kids' behaviour is consistently bad; money is consistently tight; relationships are consistently strained. They have no space to think about the future. One event could be the tipping point for contact with Child protection or another crisis service. Yet on a day-to-day basis things aren't 'bad enough' to be eligible for support. These families are often turned away from services for not meeting eligibility criteria, or find themselves below the radar of services. Families that are stuck see Family by Family as an opportunity to break out of the daily grind and do something different. The opportunity to connect, exchange and learn from a family that has been in their shoes is both motivating and comforting. Choosing the family they connect with allows them to feel in control and empowered to move forwards.

Families in and out of crisis

Families who are in and out of crisis live through lots of ups and downs. Day to day living is volatile: from violent relationships to addictions to child removal and reunification. These families are involved with crisis services, and often have multiple caseworkers. Whilst they have lots of service contact, these families have few good people to turn to - their informal networks have brought more bad than good. Although they want to 'get rid of services' they have few alternatives. Their focus is on day-to-day survival. A different future seems unattainable. Families that are in and out of crisis are attracted to Family by Family because it gives them the opportunity to connect with a non-professional: someone like them who is interested in their story and will help them change the things they want to change without judgment.

Families moving on after crisis

Families moving on after crisis have big stories. They are starting over after a major trauma or life event - be it leaving a violent partner, having children removed, or recovering from addiction. These families have had service contact in the past, but now that the acute crisis has passed, have found their case closed. Yet they often remain isolated without the resources to move forwards. Family by Family offers

them an opportunity to think about and work towards life beyond crisis and resilience. Connecting with another family lets them see what's possible and start moving in that direction.

Families wanting more

Families who want more are actively looking for new opportunities. They may have just moved to the area or to Australia, and are seeking good stuff for their families. Whilst they have very little service contact, they can identify what they want to be different. This may be to improve family relationships, share ideas about parenting, see new places or make new friends. Family by Family offers families wanting more the opportunity to exchange ideas and aspirations with other families, and to adapt to a new cultural context. By helping these families to connect in to their community, they become a resource for other families.

Families wanting to share

Families who have overcome tough times often do not realise they have something valuable to share with other families. These families are so busy doing family they have not had the opportunity to reflect on how or why they are now thriving. As one sharing family put it: "To be invited to be a sharing family was quite humbling...Initially I thought I raise kids, I look after my house and I couldn't work out what in that was useful." What motivates sharing families to engage is the idea that their personal experiences and struggles can be useful. In the past, they may have been the clients of mental health, domestic violence, and new migrant services. Now, they can offer strategies and supports to others.

Case Studies

During the 12-week prototype, sharing families linked up with families who were stuck, in and out of crisis, moving on, and wanting more. We learned families stuck with self and with services could benefit from longer link-ups. Below are two case studies of link-ups with families in the stuck with self and in and out of crisis segments. Names and some details have been changed.

Lawson and Velmer Family

The Lawson Family first heard about Family by Family through door knocking in the local area. The Lawson family have a long history of intervention from a range of crisis services. Three of the Lawson children have a diagnosis of ADHD and their father, Sam, often resorts to calling the police as a means of managing their behaviour. Lucy, Sam's wife of three years, moved to Australia from the Philippines. She attends English classes several times a week, however still feels an overwhelming sense of isolation. There is not enough money for Lucy to return home to visit her family and friends. Despite repeatedly asking for help, the Lawson family have been told their problems are 'not bad enough' to receive a service. Family life remains stuck.

The Lawson family linked up with the Velmer family who also migrated from the Philippines three years ago. The Lawson family joined Family by Family to "get their kids behaviour in check", however over time that goal shifted. Now they are working on spending more time together as a family, exploring new places, meeting new people. The two families have visited museums, libraries, the beach, had shared dinners, games nights and bible study. The Velmer family also linked them into the local church, which they now attend together every Sunday. Both Sam and Lucy have reported significant changes for themselves and their family: "The changes in my boys has been influenced by the Velmer family...they're more well behaved, more respectful towards us and more helpful around the house." The Lawson's now have the confidence to go out as a family and have a new appreciation for each other and are motivated to keep moving forwards.

Breen and Smith Family

The Breen family connected to Family by Family through their social worker. Sally Breen is a mother of five. Four of her children were removed by the state child protection agency, and are now in the care of their maternal grandmother. Her 6-year old son, Matt, is still in her care and has special needs that require regular trips to the hospital. Since her children were removed, Sally has made some significant changes to hers and her family's life. The one remaining concern was the extreme social isolation and lack of social support.

The services involved with Sally and her family were ready to close her file, however due to a lack of social support, were concerned that she might re-enter the system. Sally opted-in to Family by Family after she saw pictures of what it was all about, but was nervous about meeting a “stranger” who might not understand Matt’s condition.

The Breen family linked up with the Smith family and Sally’s mind was quickly put at ease. Together they went opp shopping, walking, to the local park, to the markets and the library. The Smith family also introduced Sally and Matt to a Thursday knitting club and Friday night dinners at the local community house. The Breen family are now strongly engaged in both of these community events and look forward to them each week. Sally now reports that people from the community say hello to her, and she knows there are more people to turn to for help.

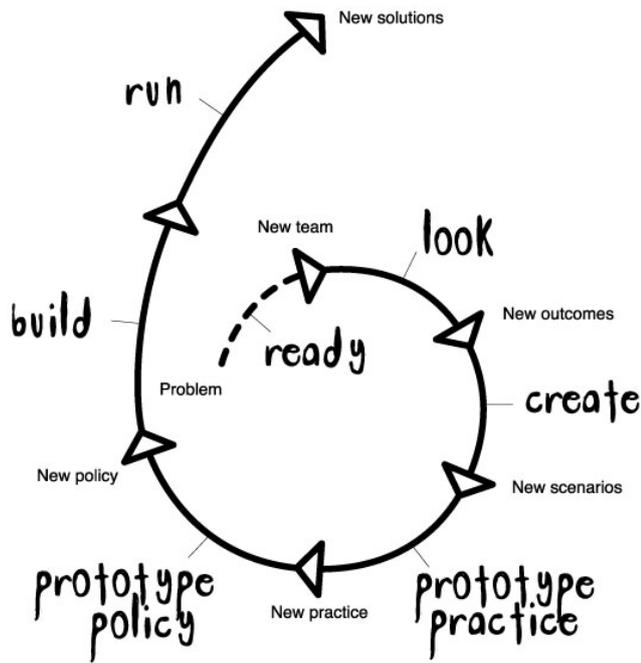
Deacon Family

We first connected with the Deacon family when door knocking in the local area. The Deacon family consists of mum, dad, four children and a grandchild on the way. Mum had her first child at 14 years of age and at age 34 is about to become a grandmother. Teenage pregnancy and parenthood is just one story for this family. Workplace injury, unemployment, poor mental health and victims of violence are other challenges this family have faced. After sharing dinner with the Deacon family it was clear that we were in a household that was filled with positive feedback, energy, support and a desire to help others. When we first asked the family to be a sharing family, they thought we were joking. They couldn’t figure out what they had to give. The Deacon family now report that Family by Family has enabled their own family to grow and change whilst helping another family to do the same.

Methodology

Family by Family is the product of a 12-month process to co-design, prototype, and scale a different response to family stress and crisis. Co-design means working with users to create interactions & experiences that are of value. Prototyping means repeatedly testing and improving those interactions & experiences, along with the policies & systems needed for spread and scale. Co-design and prototyping are design methods. We blend design methods with social science, community development, and business methods to understand how people behave in context; to activate and connect people; and to create ways to leverage new resource at scale. More important than the methods we use are the questions we ask. We group questions and methods into seven phases of work: Ready to Start, Look, Create, Prototype Practice, Prototype Policy, Build, Run. This methodology has been developed by The Australian Centre for Social Innovation’s Radical Redesign Team.

Fig. 2-3 The approach used to develop Family by Family



The Ready Phase

The project, initiated by The Australian Centre for Social Innovation, began with assembling a team to tackle the brief. South Australia's child protection agency seconded a senior manager to the project team to provide insight into the existing system and learn a new way of working. She joined a project team which included a service designer and a sociologist, who had developed and used the design plus social science methodology in the UK as part of the organisation InWithFor. Alongside the project team sat a sounding board of city, state government officials, academics, and an NGO director. The Sounding Board provided critical feedback and support.

The Look Phase

The real project work began by going out and about to meet and learn from families. We wanted to know: What does it look like for families to thrive? Which families are thriving despite the odds - in other words, which families are the positive deviants? We met families in front of shopping centres, supermarkets, bus stops, and door-knocking; shared dinner with 25 families; and spent 2-3 days doing ethnographic work with 10 families. We collated our experiences and insights into case studies and a report *Going for the Good Life* (Lockett, et. al, 2010).

The Create Phase

Using the insights from the Look Phase, we asked: What are all the opportunities for enabling families to thrive? We brainstormed hundreds of ideas, developed scenarios and paper-based materials, and took everything back out to families to test. Most of the ideas didn't resonate with families, but one idea started to excite families: bringing families together with similar experiences to 'do more good stuff'.

The Prototype Practice Phase

Once we had a concept that resonated, we looked at how to make the concept real and effective. We asked: What interactions and experiences seem to prompt change for which families? We fleshed out the idea for Family by Family, and ran the model at a small scale with 20 families for 12 weeks to learn what worked and what didn't. We learnt that families saw immediate value in the concept, but that focussing in on behaviour change was hard. We iterated the training, coaching role, and materials to emphasise behaviour change.

The Prototype Policy Phase

Having identified practice that prompted change with and for families, we asked: What systems and policies need to be in place to support that practice? We created and tested metrics and materials for service providers and are continuing to explore how Family by Family can shape system-wide practice.

The Build Phase

The goal is to grow Family by Family. We asked the question: What is the business model and case for growing Family by Family? We ran projections, calculated the social return on investment, and wrote an investment case for cities, governments, and other funders. Family by Family scales using a hub and spoke model wherein a central hub supports multiple local sites. The more local sites up and running, the more efficient the cost model.

The Run Phase

Transitioning Family by Family from a small-scale prototype to a large-scale solution requires building the right team for scale with the capacity to continually innovate and generate new resource. Over the coming months and years, we will continue to work with families to iterate the Family by Family model. We'll explore which families Family by Family prompts the most change for, and where Family by Family is not creating change, co-design new kinds of iterations and experiences. We'll also explore how Family by Family can shape professional practice and existing family services.

The Limitations and Opportunities

Family by Family is one response to family stress and crisis; it cannot be the only response. Indeed, Family by Family complements, rather than replaces, existing professional services and community development activities. Many families' stories are so complex that multiple interventions are required. Understanding when and where Family by Family fits in the sequence of interventions will be important to its long-term success. So will understanding the intensity and duration of link-ups most likely to prompt sustainable change with and for families. Despite the unknowns, Family by Family offers policymakers and practitioners a new way of engaging people, identifying their resources and capabilities, and using them as the solution to tough social problems.

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