

themselves. They have rallied for community support and encouraged parents to work together.' (Enfield)

'Establishing the support of upper management personnel is primary in helping to break down barriers. Including parents in this process helps share and feed back information. Maintaining positive role modelling throughout the whole process is important in reinforcing new behaviours. Creating a welcoming, non-judgemental, flexible environment is the key to engaging parents. Creating strong service provider networks is important in helping to follow up on parents' issues and offer back-up support. Although attending meetings and presentations is time consuming, it is an important way of creating connections with individual workers and improving communication between service providers. Often great work can come from two like-minded workers connecting from different organisations, but unfortunately it often isn't sustained, due to workers moving on. One of the themes that came out of the community consultation was that parents were tired of being referred to and from organisations, and wished they could develop connections with one worker who could follow up their issues.' (Enfield)

'Volunteers expressed a need to take on more responsibility and more defined roles, so we have developed five different roles they can fill for periods of two to three months. We initially recruit volunteers as Family Support Workers, and later they have the freedom to choose another role in which to further develop their skills. For example, our Volunteer Research Officer looks at action research and different cycles, while our playroom supervisor is in charge of the themes of the playroom and the activities for the children. With every volunteer role I have provided the volunteers with a reflective journal in which they write about their project, how they are going about it, and any suggestions for change. Compiling the journal also means that the information and knowledge is not lost should the volunteer be unable to continue in the role and somebody else has to take it over.' (Families NOW)

Stronger Families Learning Exchange Staff

Introducing more members



KELLEY JOHNSON

Training and Support Team Leader

What do you most enjoy about working in the Stronger Families Learning Exchange team?

I have now been team leader for about three months and am finding working with this team really exciting and interesting. We all come from very different backgrounds and contribute widely diverse views and ideas. Journeys out to projects in Queensland and to Western Australia have been both rewarding and really motivating.

What do you hope to learn from working in the team?

I think the Stronger Families Fund projects and the work of the SFLEX team give a great opportunity to explore how action research can be used in a variety of different contexts. I have worked for a long time as an action researcher, but I am learning a lot here about how to

support others to do action research. I am also learning a great deal about practice and am reviewing my ideas about theory too.

What is your contribution to the team project?

I have worked in action research in a number of different places and with different groups, including people with disabilities, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and in women's health. I have also taught action research methods in post-secondary education. So I bring this background with me to contribute to the work of the team. I am interested in exploring good ways of supporting people to do action research in their own communities, and ways of including people in meaningful ways in the work.



LISA NATOLI

Training & Support Team member

What do you most enjoy about working in the SFLEX project?

I have a real passion for community-based projects, so the opportunity to be exposed to such a range of terrific projects, staff and communities is a real drawcard. I particularly enjoy being challenged by the diversity of the projects, their differing needs for support and the need for me to be resourceful and to think on my feet!

What do you hope to learn from working in the team?

The Training & Support team is a melting pot of interesting people with equally interesting and varied skills, experiences and methods of working. I hope that I will be able to learn from these differing approaches and knowledge bases to complement the support I can offer to my projects.

What is your contribution to the team/project?

I have a long history of visiting and working with community-based projects in a range of development settings – from the Philippines to Pakistan and Azerbaijan to Afghanistan! Experiences have been

mainly around supporting creative and participatory approaches to health promotion and in community-based disaster preparedness. All this sounds very different, but really, the challenges of developing and managing responsive

projects and of engaging communities in ways that are relevant to them are similar everywhere. I hope that these experiences and lessons will support my contribution to the team and the projects.



ELLEN FISH

SFLEX Project Officer

What do you most enjoy about working in the SFLEX project?

I enjoy the interesting variety of the work I do at the Learning Exchange as a Project Officer. My work involves tasks like maintaining and updating the mailing list database of people who receive our publications, assisting people from the Stronger Families Fund projects with any resource needs, assisting in the coordination and production of the Bulletin, contributing material, administrative tasks, and developing the Good Practice Projects Database. I also enjoy being part of the various SFLEX working groups, which include the workshop, resource and data working groups.

What do you hope to learn from working in the team?

Like Lisa, I love working with, and learning from, a team of people who have a diverse range of skills, experience, backgrounds and ideologies, and who bring all of these aspects to the way in which they work. I also want to improve my knowledge of action research, and incorporate its way of working into my work with the Learning Exchange.

What is your contribution to the team/project?

My working background includes positions such as a research assistant in an academic institution, a market research

analyst, a social worker in health and community settings, and administrative and customer service experience. I also have an educational background in quantitative and qualitative social research and am currently undertaking a Master of Social Science in Policy and Human Services. My varied experience, knowledge, skills and methods of working will be my contribution to the team effort in terms of my support to the SFLEX Training and Support Team, my work with the Clearinghouse arm of SFLEX and to the resources assistance I give to the Stronger Families Fund projects.



KATRINA BREDHAUER

Training & Support Team member

What do you most enjoy about working in the team?

I have recently moved to Melbourne from Brisbane, and already there is a lot to enjoy about the SFLEX team. They have been really welcoming, and are incredibly enthusiastic and capable people who are really committed to the work that they are doing. I have not had the opportunity to visit any projects yet, but I am really looking forward to getting to know people and the places they work in.

What do you hope to learn from working in the team?

I think there is much to be learned. I want to increase my knowledge and experience of action research, as well as

finding interesting and flexible ways to help projects to use action research in their work. I am also really looking forward to seeing more of Australia and meeting a whole range of people.

What is your contribution to the team/project?

I have come to SFLEX with a background in psychology, and from three great years of working with Reconnect, which is a program with a similar approach to that of the Stronger Families Fund and is also run by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services. During that time I worked with and supported families and young people at risk of homelessness, carried out action research projects within my community,

contributed to the formation of the South East Queensland Reconnect gatherings, and was a trainer for the last Reconnect National Action Research Training Conference. From this I have a good understanding about how action research works (and doesn't work!) in community settings, as well as first-hand experience as a worker in this environment. I have also worked for the Young People at Risk program in both rural and urban locations within a health promotion framework, which gave me an understanding of what it is like to live and work in these contexts. Along with these experiences and understandings, I also hope to contribute my enthusiasm and creativity to the team.