



Australian Government

Australian Institute of Family Studies  
Stronger Families Learning Exchange

The Stronger Families Learning Exchange aims to contribute to the formation of an evidence base about the effectiveness of early intervention from which to inform policy, practice and research in strengthening families and communities. It does this through the provision of a clearinghouse and action research support for Stronger Families Fund projects. The Stronger Families Learning Exchange, based at the Australian Institute of Family Studies, is funded by the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services.

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## EDITORIAL

# Stronger Families Learning Exchange

## Where we're at

Welcome to the first Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin of 2004. For about two years the SFLEX Bulletin has documented the work of Stronger Families Fund projects which are funded by Family and Community Services. There are now 53 projects across Australia using

early intervention strategies to strengthen families and communities with young children. Some of the projects are just commencing their work and others are now reaching the final stages of their development.

The Bulletins have also documented the work of the Stronger Families Learning Exchange based at the Australian Institute of Family Studies. The Learning Exchange has provided resources for the projects and disseminated information arising from their work through a website and written materials, while the Training and Support Team has supported projects to develop action research and evaluation.

The Bulletins have sought to reflect the different stages of the projects over time and their involvement with action research and evaluation. Early Bulletins were concerned with the nature of action research, evaluation and early intervention. Later ones focused on community participation, strategies for engaging people in the projects, and the different ways in which projects were undertaking their work. Therefore as we move into 2004 it is fitting that this Bulletin should reflect some of the concerns of projects as they enter the later stages of their development.

The Bulletin has a strong focus on finding creative ways to document the work of the Stronger Families Fund projects. This is in response to repeated requests from projects for assistance in finding ways to document their work which are both relevant and accessible to the communities in



Kelley Johnson

which they are based, and also useful to government and policy makers. When funded projects reach the end of their funding period, paid workers may disappear, project achievements may have lasting effects on participants and communities, and those involved with the project may

go on with increased skills and motivation. However, for the work to be of use to others with similar concerns, and for it to provide a foundation for later developments, it needs to be carefully and creatively documented. We hope that the ideas in this Bulletin will assist projects in this important work and will allow their achievements be known widely so that they can be used in the future.

The Bulletin also provides some interesting accounts by projects on how they have worked collaboratively across different community organisations. The Stronger Families Fund projects were mandated to develop strong community partnerships and many have achieved success in doing this. It is clear from the articles in this Bulletin that this is not always easy and does take both time and resources. However, the results of such collaboration can add much to community capacity building and to ensuring that projects create a lasting legacy.

Finally, this Bulletin focuses particularly on the work of the projects through a series of questions which address the work they are currently doing. These provide valuable snapshots of the projects. It should be remembered that, by accessing previous Bulletins, it is also possible to gain a picture of the development of some projects over time.

We hope that 2004 will prove to be a creative and exciting year for Stronger Family Fund projects, whether they are just beginning, are part way through their work, or nearing completion.