Innovative Workforce Fund

Progress Performance Report

Families as peer workers in early childhood intervention organisations

Due 31 October 2017

Date when last updated: 13 September 2017

Organisation: Plumtree Children's Services Inc.

Project Name: Families as peer workers in early childhood intervention organisations

Contact name and position of person responsible for evaluation: Dr Melanie Heyworth, Project Manager

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Reflecting on implementation and early outcomes

Project Establishment

A key aspect of our project is to engage all key stakeholders affected by the integration of families as peer workers in early childhood intervention (ECI) organisations to best understand their experiences and perceptions of peer workers. The experiences of families (Plumtree's "service users"), peer facilitators and workers, allied health professionals and educators (or "non-peer staff"), and management are all vital to understand fully the benefits and challenges of utilising peer workers in ECI settings.

We are involving key stakeholders in three important ways:

1. As representatives on our Steering Committee,
2. As members of our Working Group, and
3. As participants in our research and data collection.

Steering Committee

The project's Steering Committee comprises representatives from each of the stakeholder groups, including Plumtree's CEO and Manager, two allied health (non-peer) staff representatives, two peer facilitators, one service user (parent), and the CEO of Hunter Prelude Early Intervention Centre (the program's pilot centre), as well as the project manager. The inclusion of a Hunter Prelude representative

on the Steering Committee allows the views of the broader ECI sector to be heard, as well as giving us better access to the views of our pilot partner.

The Steering Committee will take responsibility for the guidance and oversight of the project, making sure that each stakeholder's voice is heard throughout the project, and helping not only to understand the benefits of a peer workforce but also to generate solutions to potential challenges with the peer worker initiative and the project more broadly. The Steering Committee will help to formulate the general scope of, and give feedback on, the various resources we prepare as the deliverables for this project.

Members of the Steering Committee have been invited:

- To provide advice and expertise to Plumtree on the development and implementation of the project;
- To review reports and resources developed;
- To take part in active discussion at each meeting, and
- To facilitate access to expertise and data relevant to the project.

We had an enthusiastic response from our service users to participate in the Steering Committee (with five formal written expressions of interest, and three verbal expressions of interest). However, it proved more difficult to find peer and non-peer staff who had the capacity to sit on the Steering Committee, primarily because of existing workloads. Although we established Steering Committee membership as additional paid work for peer and non-peer staff, with child-minding and relief from face-to-face casework offered, most peer and non-peer staff (whilst valuing the project's aims) felt unable to commit to the Steering Committee positions given their current work and home commitments. One peer facilitator who did volunteer initially, later asked to be removed from her position because she was aware of a potential conflict of interest, since a non-peer staff representative on the Steering Committee is also her child's allied health professional. It is precisely these kinds of tensions (whether perceived or real) and boundaries that this project will address.

Despite initial recruitment challenges, we have been able to convene a full Steering Committee, which met initially on the 19 October 2017. This meeting was later than anticipated for the reasons outlined above. The Steering Committee is scheduled to meet again on Monday 11 December 2017, and will meet during key periods throughout 2018.

Working Group

Along with the project manager, one peer worker and one non-peer staff member from the Steering Committee have also nominated to make up the project's Working Group. The Working Group will work alongside the project manager to administer interviews and to review existing Plumtree data, to gain the data necessary to provide a research base for the project. They will help to analyse data, problem-solve potential challenges and limitations, and help to prepare the resources for the Steering Committee's approval and feedback.

It was thought preferable to have stakeholder representatives liaise directly with their stakeholder groups during data collection. Thus, the peer representative will work directly with other peer staff, and the non-

peer representative will work directly with other non-peer staff. We anticipate that this arrangement will facilitate trustworthy working relationships, which foster honesty and transparency. Currently there is no parent/service user representative on the Working Group. Depending on the uptake and outcomes of the Nominal Group Technique ("NGT") research (on which see below), we may choose to invite service users to participate in semi-structured interviews to obtain further qualitative data; if this path is indicated, we will engage a parent to work with the existing Working Group to administer the interviews.

Research Participation

In terms of research design, the Steering Committee considered the following possible methodologies:

- •   Semi-structured interviews (qualitative data),
- •   Structured online survey (Likert scales; quantitative data), and
- •   Nominal Group Technique.

Although a mixed methodology research design is preferable, the Steering Committee is acutely aware of time and monetary pressures, especially given our priority to hear the voices of any many stakeholders as possible. The practicalities of administering multiple, hour-long semi-structured interviews to management representatives, the possible ten peer facilitators (plus additional peer workers and peer volunteers), the vast service user body, and the almost sixty non-peer staff population, rendered this option unfeasible as the sole, or primary, form of data collection. Such a method is not only costly and time-consuming to the Working Group interviewers, but it potentially limits stakeholder participation, requiring a substantial time investment by interviewees. The Steering Committee were also concerned that this kind of data collection often privileges the loudest voices, rather than the majority experience. Structured online surveys prioritise the capture of quantitative data and limit the potential to understand data more qualitatively. NGT was raised as an effective way of encoding the qualitative and quantitative data of multiple voices simultaneously, with data analysis occurring in situ, saving time and money.

Accordingly, the Steering Committee are investigating a research design based on NGT primarily, with the option of offering stakeholders who are unable or unwilling to participate in such NGT research access to an online survey. Given the unique nature of the information they have to share, it was also suggested that certain individuals (including Sylvana Mahmic, CEO; Robin Treloar, Manager; Hajar Chami-Batch, Accounts Manager, and Plumtree's peer worker consultant and partner, Dr Annick Janson) be interviewed by the Working Group to understand the recruitment, training, induction, role descriptions and organisational benefits and challenges of peer workers. Plumtree's existing data (for example, service user numbers and satisfaction surveys) will also be referenced.

In response to this discussion in the first Steering Committee meeting, it was decided that consultation with Dr Patricia O'Brien of the University of Sydney's Centre for Disability Studies (CDS) would be beneficial to help us to determine if this model is the most time and financially economic research design, which will ascertain the views of as many stakeholders as possible in a balanced and effective way. This consultation with the CDS began on Monday 30 October. If NGT is adopted, we will extend this relationship with the CDS to include hiring an NGT facilitator with an understanding of the disability sector.

Current Challenges

The primary hinderance of the project thus far has been the capacity of staff, peer and non-peer alike, to participate in the research and project. The NDIS rolled out in Plumtree's service delivery area in July 2017, and all staff are adjusting to the increased workload accompanying that rollout. Although service users themselves were enthusiastic to participate in various roles in the project, staff were wary about increased work commitments, even if that work was paid additionally.

The research design of the project, then, must reflect the lived experiences of stakeholders: extended one-on-one interviews are too time intensive for interviewers and interviewees alike. Finding the right research design which balances quality data collection with financial and time realities has taken some time, although with the aid of the CDS, we are confident that the bulk of data collection will be finalised and analysed by the end of 2017.

One outstanding issue is how best to proceed with financial sustainability modelling for the project. Plumtree has some embryonic hypotheses about how peer workers might be used as therapy assistants (thereby representing substantial cost reductions over sole use of traditional allied health professionals and educators). Equally, we hope to explore within the project whether service users' reliance on traditional therapies and formal supports decrease with the influence of peer workers, who teach service users how to implement and utilise informal supports more effectively. However, we do not yet sufficient experience with NDIS to conduct a formal cost-benefit analyses, or indeed a comparative study between families utilising peer worker support, and those not. We are currently in discussion with Vanessa Robinson, our project coach, about the best way to proceed with financial sustainability modelling.

Initial Observations: Requirements for Initiation

Although to date, the project work has primarily concentrated on establishment issues, a Literature Review for the project is now near to completion. The Literature Review is a key deliverable for the project because peer workers have been utilised extensively in the Mental Health sector for the past two decades. Rather than duplicating many years of detailed research, this project is interested in understanding the major developments in the Mental Health sector to inform our own best practice in the disability sector. Importantly, peer workers, defined as people with a lived, personal experience who are trained and employed to support others (their peers) who face similar challenges, are well evidenced in the Mental Health sector. The questions being addressed in Mental Health research are whether interventions provided by peers differ significantly from the same interventions provided by non-peer staff; whether there are specific interventions that can only be delivered by peers (that is, uniquely peer-delivered services); what the cornerstones of successful peer work are, and what outcomes are associated with success (Davidson et al., 2012)?

In the Mental Health sector, widespread systemic implementation of peer workers is evidenced as beneficial (for example, in the UK with the Scottish Recovery Network [SRN], and in the US, with Arizona's META Services/Recovery Innovations, the Georgia Certified Peer Specialist Program, and the SAMHSA-HRSA [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Health Resources and Services Administration] Center for Integrated Health Solutions [CIHS]).

There are clear lessons to be learnt from Mental Health sector experiences for the successful integration of peer workers into existing organisations. These include:

- Creating clear job descriptions for each peer worker, fully endorsed by all key stakeholders (including service users and non-peer staff);
- Involving non-peer staff and service users in the process of creating peer roles and hiring peer staff;
- Identifying and valuing the unique contributions of peers when peers are used differently to traditional staff;
- Making explicit the training and skill development required of peer staff, and
- Distributing widely the successes of peer workers.

Moreover, peer work in this sector has demonstrated most benefits to all stakeholders when the peers themselves dictate how they feel they are best able to share their own lived experience, and their job descriptions depend on individual peer strengths and interests (SRN, 2005).

SAMHSA-HRSA CIHS (2016) further suggest that all non-peer staff are readied for peer integration with training on the role of peers to promote a welcoming organisational culture, and that boundary issues (for example, regarding confidentiality and privacy, receiving and providing services in the same organisation) are actively addressed before integration. Importantly, the evidence for successful peer integration is not universally positive: Chinman et al. (2014) emphasise that success is predicated by the organisational culture into which peers are integrated.

We agree that organisational culture is a cornerstone of successful peer integration. The success of a paid peer workforce depends upon the existing culture of the individual organisation. A requirement for initiation of a peer workforce in other ECI organisations, then, is to identify and communicate what organisational culture needs to be in place (or alternatively, the ways in which organisations can achieve the requisite cultural shift) to ensure that organisations are ready for peer workers. Clearly, then, in our interviews with management, we need to ascertain what Plumtree's organisational culture is, so that our knowledge is transferrable to others.

Plumtree's own experiences and learnings from the Mental Health care sector also suggests that an organic "reverse" recruitment process seems most suited to peer integration. Peer worker recruitment at Plumtree has not occurred in a traditional pattern of advertising a specific role for which peers apply. Rather, once identified, potential peer leaders have been recruited and offered roles which suit their skills and interests (in other words, a person-first process). As is best practice in the Mental Health sector, Plumtree's peer workers have often largely directed and nominated their own roles. Although we acknowledge that more organisational input may be required, Plumtree's Peer Facilitator recruitment process has been one of bringing together a pool of peer leaders on which Plumtree draws to fill both new service delivery roles, as well as existing roles (including administrative roles, for instance).

Project Activities

Activities Undertaken

In accordance with our Activity Work Plan, we have undertaken the following activities:

1. Employ staff. We have hired the Project Manager, as well as engaging the services of a research consultant, Dr Patricia O'Brien (initial meeting 30/10/17), and investigating hiring outside expert consultants to facilitate NGT research and to coordinate the production of marketing resources and knowledge translation design.

2. Contact with project coach. The project's manager and Plumtree's CEO have been in contact with Vanessa Robinson, as per our Activity Work Plan. Vanessa has helped us to clarify our thinking particularly about the types of resources we will need to consider. Vanessa is currently helping us to address challenges regarding financial sustainability modelling. She is guiding us through the possibility of exploring how peer workers can be funded by NDIS packages. These conversations are evolving and ongoing.

3. Contact between Project Manager and CEO. As per our Activity Work Plan, the Project Manager and Plumtree's CEO have been in regular contact to ensure reciprocity and clarity of vision. Contact has been both formal (minuted) and informal. This contact has allowed the project to evolve to include a more sophisticated research design and clear remit.

4. Establish governance structures. As noted above, both a Steering Committee and a Working Group have been established. Both groups have detailed Terms of Reference. The Steering Committee is the vehicle by which all stakeholder groups are represented; the Working Group is comprised of stakeholders who will liaise directly with their stakeholder group. Formal Expressions of Interest for both the Steering Committee and Working Group were distributed through Plumtree's various networks (emails, Facebook, Hipchat).

5. Ethics. On the advice of the project coach, it has been decided not to pursue formal ethics clearance since we do not have a University partner for this project. However, Plumtree has its own internal ethics processes, which have been adopted for this project. Accordingly, a Participant Consent Form and a Participant Information Form have been prepared to distribute to all stakeholders during research collection. It has also been decided that, since peer and non-peer staff will be paid for their time as participants, service users should be acknowledged for their participation with a voucher or equivalent to ensure parity between participants.

6. Project Management Software. Project management is coordinated online by Trello board software. Trello ensures that all activities are allocated a "card" to which labels and personnel can be assigned, and notes and files attached. It facilitates the flow of the project's overall timeline,

and allows the project team to be apprised of all aspects of the project. The project manager maintains the integrity of the board.

7. Research Design. As noted above, the Steering Committee have constructed a research design of mixed methodology, with a primarily NGT focus, which will be reviewed and assessed by Dr Patricia O'Brien of the University of Sydney's CDS. In consultation with Dr O'Brien, a final research design will be decided upon by the end of October, which can then be implemented in the coming months. Some steps to implementation have begun (see below).

8. The project's Literature Review is near to completion. The Literature Review engages with research that documents the status quo of ECI currently, setting the scene for the project, as well as with research that addresses peer work. Interestingly, there is surprisingly little research on paid peer work in the disability sector, although peer support is better attested. Given our interest in a formally recruited, paid peer workforce, most literature on "peer support" in the disability sector is not relevant to the project. As noted above, however, the Mental Health sector has proved to be a rich source of evidence and research, and many of the major findings from that sector are noted in the Literature Review and will shape the types of resources (especially organisational resources relating to processes, procedures, and cultural climate) that this project delivers, as well as its priorities.

    The literature from the Mental Health sector highlights how beneficial peer workers can be to all stakeholders, especially service users and the peer workers themselves. Peer workers foster hope and optimism in service users, providing holistic and inclusive services and approaches, and encouraging service users to be active participants rather than passive recipients of services. This latter seems particularly important in the context of the NDIS in which peer workers can help families to understand and realise the potential of their own influence, including how to utilise informal supports, and decreasing dependence on traditional allied health therapies and interventions.

    Peer workers are a unique workforce, the key elements of which include the giving and receiving of respectful help and support grounded in a commonality of shared experience, empathy from personal experience, engagement, and well-being. The evidenced benefits of employing peer workers to service users include increasing a sense of independence, resilience, empowerment and confidence; increasing active participation in interventions; decreasing social isolation; increasing trust with professionals, based on genuine empathy; creating a bridge between professional and service user; fostering hope, and relevant, credible services (Repper & Carter, 2011).

    The key benefits of employing peer workers to the peers themselves include an increase in self-esteem, self-worth, competence and confidence, empowerment and value, personal growth, money and skill development. Mental Health peer workers reported that working with others

allowed them to turn their personal adversity into something purposeful and valuable, which "gives back" to their community in meaningful and relevant ways.

The Mental Health sector literature documents broad support of peer roles from non-peer staff, although levels of resistance, wariness and scepticism were also documented, especially when staff were not ready for integration of peers, and boundary issues existed (especially around training, job descriptions and supervision). Challenges to implementing a program of peer workers have been documented in the Mental Health sector, then, including overcoming traditional understandings of professional boundaries and roles; designing and providing training to peers; supporting employed peers; identifying appropriate teams and roles for peers; managing accountability and risk management; ensuring appropriate occupational health practices and staff inductions, and ensuring peers become valued team members. These factors are all of immediate consequence to the successful integration of peer workers into ECI organisations, and will impact on both our research and deliverables.

9. Research Implementation. Implementation of the research has begun, with proforma questions for the semi-structured interviews of key individuals currently being reviewed by the Steering Committee. Likert-type rating scale questions are also being prepared for an online survey to access stakeholders unwilling or unable to partake in NGT research. Copy is also currently being prepared to distribute to stakeholders through Plumtree's various networks, to give information on the project and invite them to participate in NGT or online.

10. Resources. We have begun to think more concretely about the types of resources we will prepare and the audiences for those resources. We are also investigating an external consultant to help us to determine and prepare appropriate resources. Our proposed resources can be broadly categorised as organisational and marketing. In terms of organisational resources, we are anticipating that these will include both Knowledge Translation (KT), as well as processes and procedures required for the successful introduction and integration of peer workers. Examples of KT and organisational resources include guidelines for recruitment, induction processes, and sample job descriptions. We have begun collecting examples of accessible KT throughout our networks and from other relevant projects, and are compiling a compendium of possible templates for KT.

Our marketing resources will aim to communicate the benefits and potential of peer workers to ECI organisations (management), to non-peer staff, and to service users/families. This latter category is especially important for future sustainability so that service users can actively choose to incorporate peer work into their NDIS packages.

Activity Work Plan

We have updated our Activity Work Plan to reflect the eight-week extension. Primarily, this extension will allow for a fuller exploration of peer workers in our pilot phase at Hunter Prelude; it will also allow us to better manage our time across the Christmas holiday period.

In this initial establishment period we have taken the opportunity to refine our research design and project logic, and to achieve clarity about the types of resources and KT we will deliver. This increased clarity has resulted in envisaging the project in three overlapping phases:

1. Establishment, research, data collection,
2. Development of resources, broken into
   a. Organisational resources and KT, required for Hunter Prelude pilot, and
   b. Marketing resources to showcase peer workers to ECI organisations, existing non-peer staff, and service users, to be undertaken during Hunter Prelude pilot, and
3. Hunter Prelude pilot program.

Since Hunter Prelude is already committed to peer workers, it was agreed that marketing resources were not critical to have completed for the pilot program to proceed. We will then have considerably more time to prepare the marketing resources whilst Hunter Prelude pilots peer workers in their organisation. This reconsideration is critical given the extended pilot timing.

Whilst the project has proceeded thus far largely according to our Activity Work Plan, then, that Plan has been updated to incorporate both the extension period and our new clarity.

Project Outcomes

We have partially achieved the following outcomes in our Outcomes Matrix:

1. *Provide access to services that were previously unavailable within the local area, and*
   More appropriate services can be extended to existing and new service user cohorts.
   Our peer workers are continually facilitating new peer-led service delivery options at Plumtree. Plumtree's peer workers are currently offering the Circle of Security early intervention parenting program, NDIS First Plan Ready workshops, a quarterly interest group for parents of children with autism, as well as facilitating Plumtree's award winning Now and Next program within the Plumtree community, with new interstate partners (including Hunter Prelude), and with a new community partner, the Autism Community Network (ACN). Moreover, peer workers have led Now and Next in multiple languages to ensure cultural sensitivity and access to isolated service users (including in Arabic, Mandarin, and Vietnamese). All of these services are uniquely peer-led and would be unavailable without peer workers. As we interrogate Plumtree's service user data through November and December, we will be able to ascertain the uptake of these new peer-led services, as well as understand the demographics of service users of peer-led services (new families, existing families, hard-to-reach communities, etc.).

2. *Investigate how peer workers can offer unique perspectives on service experience and design, which impacts on service user satisfaction and encourages positive family engagement and active partnerships.*

   As we implement our research methodology (NGT) over the coming months, we will be able to access the opinions of service users on these matters. NGT is a group process which can be used in groups of varying sizes, which considers every participant's opinion equally. NGT ensures that all participants actively participate in data collection and can resolve potential conflicts and controversy through solution generation. NGT is both qualitative and quantitative, so will facilitate a deep understanding of service users' views.

3. *Attract new and suitable workers to the sector. Show how peer workers are an untapped potential NDIS workforce to complement and support specialist staff in the ECI sector, offering an alternative to the "expert" model.*

   Plumtree is continually recruiting new peer leaders to its peer workforce to fulfill a variety of roles (from facilitation of group programs, to administrative work, to therapy assistance, to blog writing). Through the research methodology and semi-structured interviews, we will ascertain what roles peers are fulfilling, and their work satisfaction and retention.

4. *Demonstrate that peer workers can be integrated as valued employees into existing ECI service providers. Investigate whether peer workers provide a workforce committed to best practice in the sector and to achieving best outcomes for participants.*

   Again, as we implement our research through NGT and semi-structured interview, we will access the opinions of peer, non-peer, and management to achieve this outcome.

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Innovative Workforce Fund

Families as peer workers in early childhood intervention organisations

Updated Activity Work Plan & Evaluation and Learning Plan

Due 31 October, 2017

Project contact details

1. Project contact person

Organisation: Plumtree Children's Services Inc

Project Name: Families as peer workers in early childhood intervention organisations

Contact name and position: Dr Melanie Heyworth, Peer Facilitator, Project Manager

Contact details: mheyworth@plumtree.org.au, 0423 985 948

2. Evaluation and learning contact person

Organisation: Plumtree Children's Services Inc

Project Name: Families as peer workers in early childhood intervention organisations

Contact name and position: Dr Melanie Heyworth, Peer Facilitator, Project Manager

Contact details: mheyworth@plumtree.org.au, 0423 985 948

1. Activity Work Plan

Please update your initial work plan. Provide as much detail as possible to assist tracking progress of your project.

Milestones and deliverables	Tasks	Timeframe (Due date)
Employ staff	Recruit and appoint a project manager.	31st August, 2017 **COMPLETED**
Contact IWF Project coach, Vanessa Robinson	Sylvana Mahmic (CEO) to make initial contact with Vanessa Robinson, the project coach.	Early September, 2017 **COMPLETED**
Initial meeting between CEO and Project Manager	Sylvana Mahmic (CEO) and Melanie Heyworth to meet to discuss deliverables, Steering Committee and Working Group makeup and recruitment, reporting schedule, and broad deliverable timeline.	Early September, 2017 **COMPLETED**
Complete and submit Innovative Workforce Fund Plans	Revise and update Activity Work Plan; Complete Evaluation and Learning Plan & Outcomes Matrix.	13th September, 2017 **COMPLETED**
Implement governance structures	Release Expressions of Interest for Steering Committee. Steering Committee to be drawn from all stakeholders and to include allied health staff/educators, peer facilitators, service users [parents], CEO, project manager, representative from regional partner; Concurrently release Expression of Interest for one educator and one peer facilitator from the Steering Committee to form the Working Group.	15th September, 2017 **COMPLETED**
Ethics approval	Investigate whether ethics approval is required, and how it is to be obtained. Submit ethics application if required.	September, 2017 **COMPLETED**
Project Management software	Choose and setup project management software to assist the tracking and organisation of the project.	September, 2017 **COMPLETED**
Convene Steering Committee	Initial Steering Committee meeting; focus on preparation of a proforma interview for use by Working Group.	19th October, 2017 **COMPLETED**

Research Design consultation	Melanie Heyworth and Sylvana Mahmic to meet with Patricia O'Brien (USyd CDS) to determine final research design and hire external NGT facilitator if necessary	30th October, 2017 **IN PROGRESS**
Convene Working Group	Initial Working Group meeting; prepare semi-structured interview for Sylvana Mahmic, Robin Treloar, Annick Janson, and Hajar Chami-Batch	31st October, 2017 **IN PROGRESS**
Literature Review	Melanie Heyworth to research, collate, and prepare Literature Review covering peer worker models, impact of peer workers, and knowledge translation planning; Distribute Literature Review to Steering Committee for feedback.	End October, 2017 **IN PROGRESS**
Complete and submit Progress Performance Report; Submit updated Activity Work Plan	Reflect on implementation and early outcomes, including the project establishment, the project activities and the project outcomes to date.	31st October, 2017 **COMPLETED**
Research at Plumtree Children's Services Inc ("Plumtree") (Working Group)	Nominal Group Technique (NGT) research groups with various stakeholders (peer facilitators, non-peer staff, service users) to identify value, use, potential, impact, challenges, limitations and issues of peer workers in Plumtree, and to generate solutions; Semi-structured interviews with key personnel to ascertain recruitment, induction, training processes, organisational-level benefits and challenges, roles, etc.; Data collection and collation from existing organisational processes and sources (especially satisfaction surveys).	November and December, 2017 **IN PROGRESS**
Research collation	Working Group to collate and analyse qualitative and quantitative data from the various sources and prepare findings for presentation to Steering Committee, and for inclusion in final Written Report; Melanie Heyworth to prepare Written Report using Working Group's data for presentation to the Steering Committee.	Early January, 2017 Mid January, 2017
Develop organisational resources and processes	Consultation with marketing and resource development expert; Steering Committee to discuss acceptability, feasibility, and suitability of organisational resources and knowledge translation plan, and decide which resources will most effectively facilitate the integration of a collaborative peer	Mid January, 2017 Mid February, 2018

	workforce into an existing allied health/educator workforce, including communicating the value of a peer workforce, given the Working Group's findings; Melanie Heyworth and Working Group to begin preparation and development of organisational resources and knowledge translation plan; Presentation of resources and processes to Steering Committee for feedback and approval.	End February, 2018
Test resources and processes with external partner	Conduct training and orientation of resources and processes with regional project partner, Hunter Prelude. Hunter Prelude to implement resources and processes in their context.	Early March, 2018 March, April, May, early June 2018
Develop marketing resources and refine organisational resources/knowledge translation plan	In consultation with experts, prepare marketing resources for the broader ECI sector on peer worker integration. Marketing resources to have three discrete audiences: parents/service users, organisations (non-peer staff and management), and potential peer workers themselves; Refine organisational resources and knowledge translation to final form.	March-May 2018
Feedback from external partner	Working Group representative to complete acquire feedback and feedforward from regional partner and its participants.	Mid June, 2018
Modify resources and processes	Feedforward from Hunter Prelude to be incorporated to modify processes and resources appropriately.	End June, 2018
Complete written report and knowledge translation plan	Including feedback, feedforward, Steering Committee's and Working Group's comments.	End June, 2018
Complete and submit Final Implementation and Reflection Report, and Audited Acquittal Report	Document the project activity and reflect on learnings, evaluations and financial reporting.	12th July, 2018

2. Evaluation and Learning Plan

The project, *Families as peer workers in early childhood intervention organisations*, has nine outcomes. These are:

1. To demonstrate whether peer workers can be integrated as valued employees into existing Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) service providers and organisations, providing a workforce committed to best practice in the sector and to achieving best outcomes for participants;
2. To investigate how peer workers can offer unique perspectives on service experience and design, and to examine what impact they have on service user satisfaction, positive engagement, and active partnerships;
3. To consider peer workers as an untapped potential NDIS workforce to complement and support specialist staff in the ECI sector, offering an alternative to the "expert" model;
4. To investigate the implications and impact of a peer workforce on ECI organisations;
5. To investigate the possible roles and pricing of a peer workforce in an ECI service, including the successful utilisation and retention of peer workers;
6. To analyse and document the evidence base, benefits, limitations and challenges of the introduction of peer workers, addressing the training process, incorporation, prerequisites for selection, and key elements for successful practice based on Plumtree Children Service Inc's ("Plumtree") experiences;
7. To prepare the requisite resources to communicate the value of peer workers to the broader ECI sector;
8. To document the organisational processes for the successful introduction and integration of peer workers into ECI organisations, and the mechanisms for collaboration with them (knowledge translation plan), and
9. To complete a pilot study of the introduction of peer workers using the prepared resources with a regional partner.

Broadly, then, the project will:

- demonstrate through evidence-base and practice that peer workers can be introduced and integrated into ECI organisations,
- elucidate the impact of peer workers on service delivery, from the different perspectives of the service users, the organisation, and the peer workers themselves,
- provide resources to communicate the positive potential of peer workers to the sector, and
- document the processes by which such integration can be successfully achieved through KT plan.

The project will provide proof of concept for our innovative solution to workforce availability using peer workers, as well as show the ability and impact of a peer workforce within the sector across the three domains of service users, ECI organisations, and the peer workers themselves. The outputs will record the processes for knowledge transfer of the peer worker model, thus making this model accessible and suitable for wider implementation across the sector.

As the Activity Work Plan suggests, tracking of the project will be achieved by a flow of outputs across the duration of the project. Each output relies and builds upon that which precedes it. The project includes the following outputs:

1. **Literature Review** (draft due for completion by end-October 2017). The Literature Review will document the evidence base in the disability and associated sectors for the positive impact of peer worker initiatives. It will discuss the ways in which peer workers have already been utilized in other environments to provide a valued, committed workforce with unique, positive insights and impact. (*Outcomes 1-3 and 6*)

2. **Written Report** (draft due for completion by mid-January 2018). The Written Report will examine the benefits, limitations, challenges, impact, and value to service users, ECI organisations, and the peer workers themselves, of the incorporation of a peer workforce into Plumtree over the last two years. The methodology for this report will include qualitative and quantitative research achieved through a proforma interview, prepared under the supervision of the Steering Committee and administered by the Working Group. By Nominal Group Technique, the limitations of, and challenges associated with integrating, a peer workforce will be identified, solutions will be generated, and decisions made as to viable future alternatives that meet criteria of accessibility, feasibility and sustainability for wider implementation of this innovative workforce. The Written Report will also include detailed reference to existing data collected by Plumtree within its standard service feedback procedures and processes. (*Outcomes 1-6*)

3. **Knowledge Translation Plan and Organisational Resources** (drafts due for completion by end-January 2018). Aided by external consultants, the Working Group will prepare a Knowledge Translation (KT) Plan, with the guidance and feedback of the Steering Committee. The KT Plan will be developed to transfer information and processes from Plumtree's research to other organisations within the sector to document the organisational processes required for the successful introduction and integration of peer workers. Examples of KT and organisational resources include guidelines for recruitment, induction processes, sample job descriptions (*Outcome 8*)

4. **Various Marketing Resources** (drafts due for completion by June 2018). The Working Group and Steering Committee, aided by external consultants, will decide upon and prepare various resources to communicate the value and potential of peer workers to other ECI services (with three primary audiences of organisations, service users, and non-peer staff). (*Outcome 7*)
5. **Pilot program** (due to be undertaken in March, April, May, June 2018). The Pilot Program will include training using the KT Plan with Hunter Prelude EI Centre, our regional partner, in late February, and the introduction and integration of a peer workforce at Hunter Prelude through between March and June. Feedback and feedforward from this pilot program will be incorporated into the final resources and KT Plan for broader distribution to EI sector. (*Outcome 9*)

1. Outcomes Matrix

	Outcome Indicator	Success Criteria	Methods	
Project Outcome	What would indicate whether this outcome is achieved?	How would you judge performance on the outcome?	How will you find or collect the information you need?	Timing
Service user satisfaction and empowerment				
Provide access to services that were previously unavailable within the local area	Service user take-up of new offerings	At least ten new service users; ten existing service users access new services offered	Service user data; Plumtree Children Services Inc's ("Plumtree") standard feedback/satisfaction survey	Baseline from existing data from prior to introduction of peer facilitators; Report as per project outputs and IWF milestones
Investigate how peer workers can offer unique perspectives on service experience and design, which impacts on service user satisfaction and encourages positive family engagement and active partnerships	Service users reflect positively on the role of peer workers; Service users likely to recommend peer worker programs to other service users and participants; Service users report empowerment and engagement with peer worker offerings; Existing service users identify positive impact of peer workers on their ECI experience as compared to service delivery prior to the inception of the peer worker program	A majority of service users provide positive feedback in satisfaction surveys and within proforma interview environments, with increases in satisfaction outcomes when compared to surveys administered before the introduction of peer workers; At least six nominations from service user body to participate in Working Group and/or Steering Committee to indicate active engagement of service users	Qualitative comparison of service user feedback before and after peer facilitators' introduction to Plumtree team from existing Plumtree data; Service user participation in proforma interview administered by Working Group to ascertain information	Baseline from existing data; Interviews in October and November 2017; Further feedback over duration of IWF project; Report and resources as per project outputs and IWF milestones

Worker skills and engagement				
Attract new and suitable workers to the sector; Show how peer workers are an untapped potential NDIS workforce to complement and support specialist staff in the ECI sector, offering an alternative to the "expert" model	Number of new workers attracted and retained	5 peer workers complete three months' work and report positively about their experience	HR data; Proforma in-depth interviews conducted by Working Group	Interviews in October and November 2017; Review 2018; Report as per IWF milestones
Demonstrate that peer workers can be integrated as valued employees into existing ECI service providers; Investigate whether peer workers provide a workforce committed to best practice in the sector and to achieving best outcomes for participants	Satisfaction reported by both organisational staff and peer workers	Peer workers and allied health staff report positively about their experiences	Proforma in-depth interviews conducted by Working Group	Interviews in October and November 2017; Review 2018; Report as per IWF milestones
Prepare the requisite resources to communicate the value of peer values and the mechanisms for collaboration with them (knowledge translation)	Dossier of communication resources	Interest indicated by 3 partner ECI organisations	Dissemination of resources to ECI organisations with EOI reply	April and May 2018

Organisational sustainability				
More appropriate services can be extended to existing and new service user cohorts	Take-up by new clients; Expanded number of new service offerings; Ongoing viability	At least 4 new "hard to reach" service users; Systems are in place to support ongoing delivery	Service user data; Business system and practice audit	Report as per IWF milestones
Investigate the implications and impact (both positive and negative) of a peer workforce on ECI organisations	Written report summarizing impact, including perspectives of all stakeholders	Steering Committee and stakeholder representatives endorse validity of written report	Nominal Group Technique; Proforma interview to collect qualitative and quantitative data	Mid-December 2017
Investigate the possible roles and pricing of a peer workforce in an ECI service, including the successful utilisation and retention of peer workers	Written report and resources summarizing roles and prices of peer workers; investigate financial sustainability of introducing peer workers to an ECI setting	Peer workers recruited and retained within NDIS pricing; Peer workers adopting 4 different significant roles in Plumtree	NDIS pricing; Costs and prices are documented; HR data.	Mid-December 2017
Document the organisational processes for the successful introduction and integration of peer workers into ECI organisations (knowledge translation)	Preparation of a KT Plan, which takes into account feedback and feedforward from Plumtree's experiences (positive and negative) as per Written Report	KT Plan to be used by successfully partner in pilot grogram	Nominal Group Technique; KT Plan Templates	End-January 2018
Complete a pilot study of the introduction of peer workers using the prepared resources with a regional partner	Pilot study rolled out at Hunter Prelude EI Centre	Feedback and feedforward from pilot program service	Nominal Group Technique with Hunter Prelude, including satisfaction survey of all partner stakeholders	End-April and May 2018; Reports as per IWF milestones