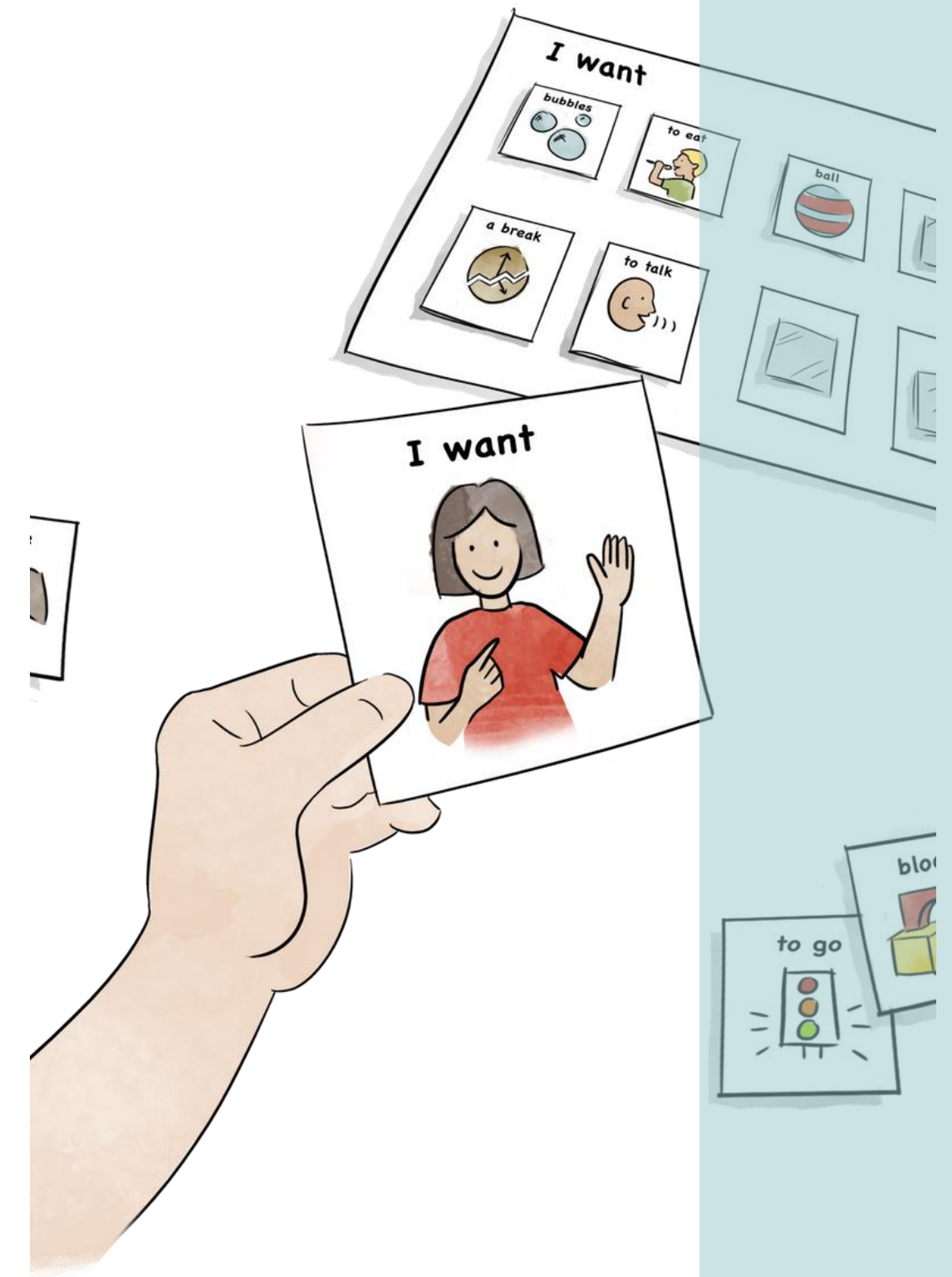




# Successful inclusion of children with disabilities: Getting families collaboration-ready and why that matters

Sylvana Mahmic, CEO Plumtree Children's Services  
Bethany Woollatt, Parent



# Acknowledgment of country



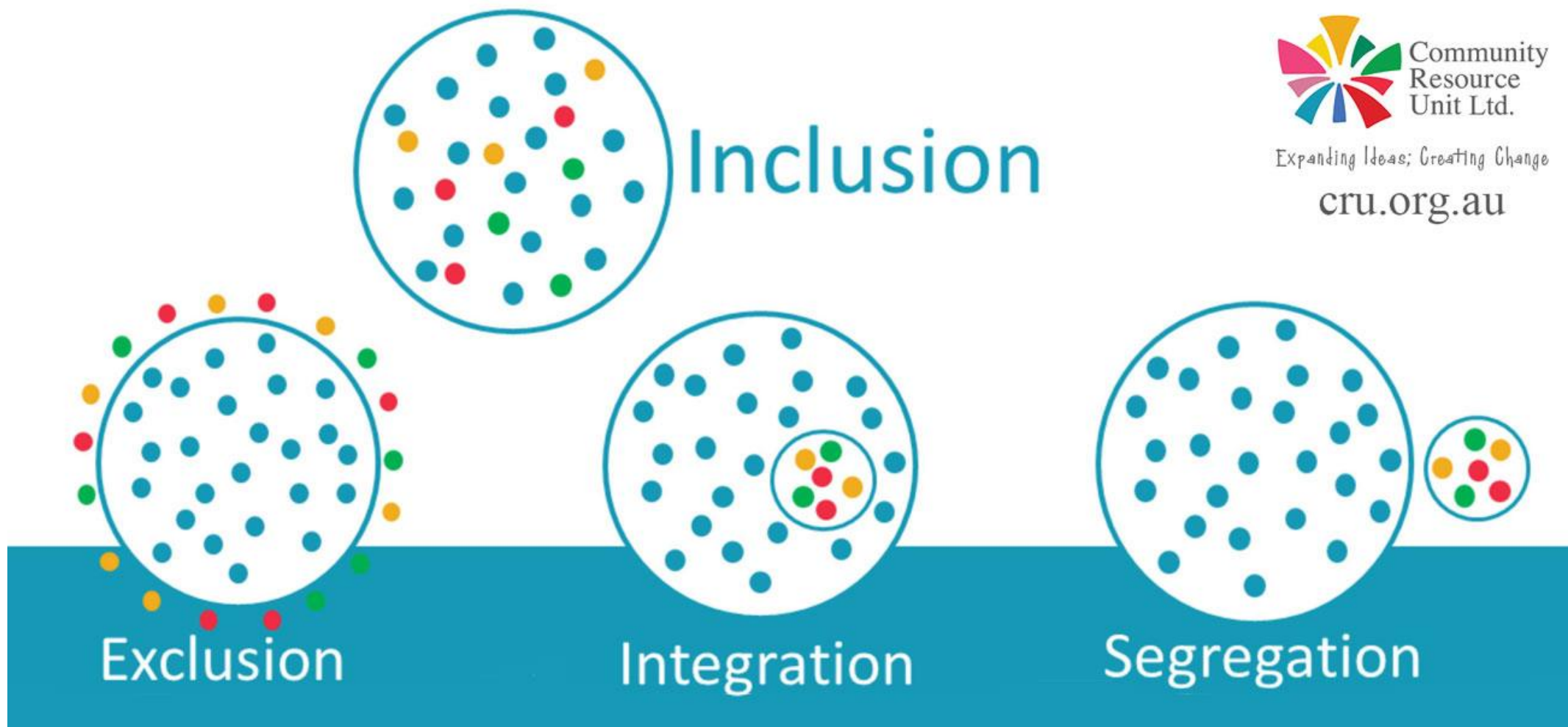
# Outcome

- Become more comfortable engaging families of children with developmental delays and disabilities and see them as a resource to the journey towards inclusion
- Be inspired to see that children and families can be involved in a partnership to achieve positive outcomes
- Hear recommendations on how professionals can engage families in family-centric ways

# Agenda

- Principles on which our approach is based
- Hear from a parent perspective about working in partnership with professionals
- Learn about how we have operationalized our principles to build family participation: getting families collaboration ready
- Tips from a parent on how professionals can engage families in family-centric ways

# Our Australian inclusion experience



 Community Resource Unit Ltd.  
Expanding Ideas; Creating Change  
[cru.org.au](http://cru.org.au)



Rating	Model	Criteria
1	Professionally centered	Families are seen mostly as deficient and incapable of healthy functioning without professional interventions. Professionals see themselves as experts who determine family needs. Families' views and opinions are given little or no credence. Interventions are implemented by professionals with families being passive participants in the intervention process.
3	Family allied	Families are seen as minimally capable of independently effecting changes in their lives. Families are viewed as agents of professionals for carrying out professionally prescribed recommendations and courses of action. Professionals enlist families to implement intervention under the guidance and tutelage of the professionals.
5	Family focused	Families are seen as capable of making choices among options professionals deem important for healthy functioning. Professionals provide advice and encouragement to families on the basis of their choices and decisions. Interventions focus on monitoring family use of professionally valued services.
7	Family centered	Families are viewed as fully capable of making informed choices and acting on their choices. Professionals view themselves as agents of families who strengthen existing and promote acquisition of new skills. Interventions emphasize capacity building and resource and support mobilization by families.

# Poll

Are you:

- Professionally centred
- Family allied
- Family focused
- Family centred

## Family-Oriented Program Models and Professional Helping Practices

Carl J. Dunst, Kimberly Boyd, Carol M. Trivette, Deborah W. Hamby

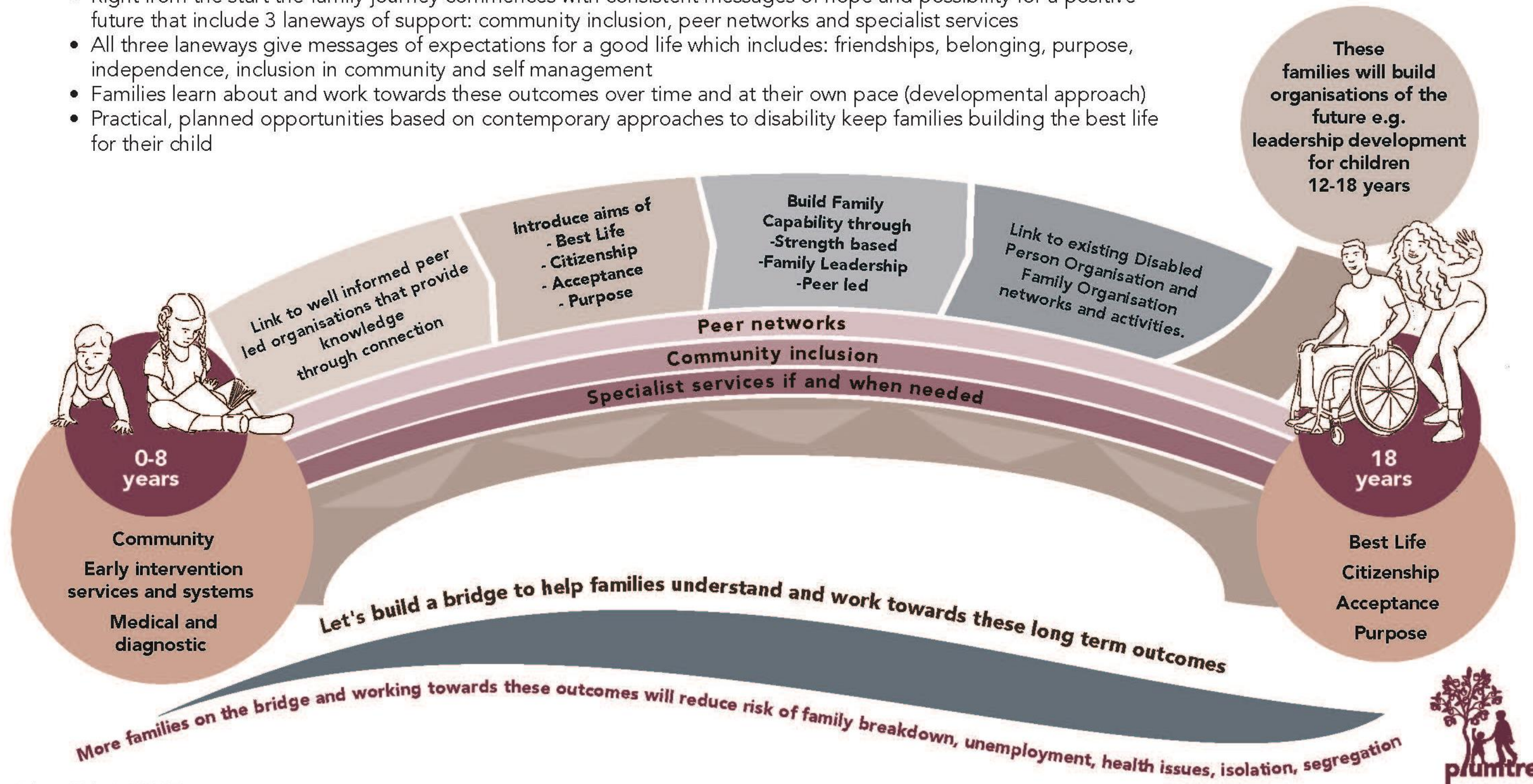
First published: 18 February 2004



# Capacity Building Through Family Leadership, Peer Work & Education

## An Investment and Developmental Approach

- Right from the start the family journey commences with consistent messages of hope and possibility for a positive future that include 3 laneways of support: community inclusion, peer networks and specialist services
- All three laneways give messages of expectations for a good life which includes: friendships, belonging, purpose, independence, inclusion in community and self management
- Families learn about and work towards these outcomes over time and at their own pace (developmental approach)
- Practical, planned opportunities based on contemporary approaches to disability keep families building the best life for their child



# Paradigm Shift

**Existing systems that promote a deficit focus**

**Disability is a disadvantage**

**Experts know best**

**Strength focused intervention to develop wellbeing literacy of families**

**We will start with our strengths**

- My child's strengths
- Set a vision and make a plan
- Work to achieve goals and celebrate success

**We've got this**

- I was in this place but now I'm in a different place
- Looking after myself is important

'Assess my child, find the gaps and fix them'

'Tell me what I need to do'

'You need to do this'

'I have a plan and my goals are achievable'

'I am powerful'

'I believe in myself'

'I changed as a mother'



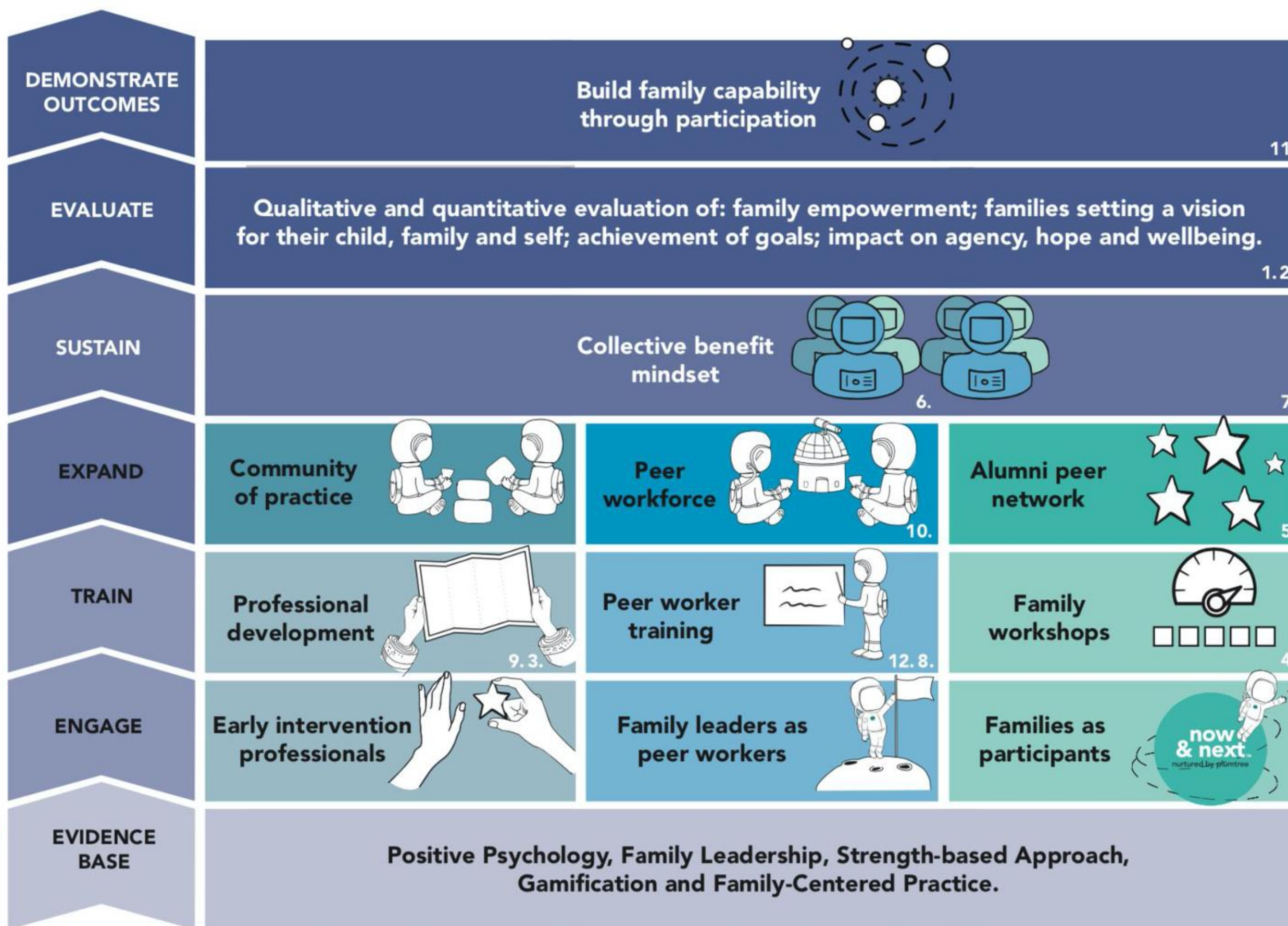
# Amplifying the voice of children with disabilities

(Mahmic & Janson, 2019)



*The inverted triangles show how family role decreases as child voice increases over time*

**Family Participation: Theory of Change**



The numbers in the illustration refer to research and publications building this Theory of Change. Please turn over to access this body of research, or contact Dr. Annick Janson, Research Director of the project: [annick@egl.ac.nz](mailto:annick@egl.ac.nz)

# **Conversation with a parent: A parent's perspective on working in partnership with professionals**



# Now and Next Timeline



## Individual Now and Next program

Now and Next One-on-One program led by a professional at the child home with 55 families.  
Funding: NSW Department of Premier & Cabinet.

## Peer Worker Training

Following a pilot, all programs became facilitated by parents. Peer Facilitators trained on-site.

## Online Now and Next Program

Now and Next Online program via Zoom piloted and refined. To date 7 groups graduated with results comparable to international benchmarking.

## Online Peer Worker Training

Peer Facilitator training via Zoom launched, with distance coaching for local trainees, with Kinsight, Canada.



## Group Now and Next program

Now and Next group program led by professionals launched in Sydney. To date **447** participants graduated from **43** groups.

## International Hubs

First programs carried out internationally. First Hub launched in NZ at McKenzie Centre where 6 Peer Facilitators were trained on-site. Funding: CCS Disability Action, Social Innovation Grant. To date: **4** countries offering Now and Next. New Country Hubs in planning: **2**

## Online Pictability Training

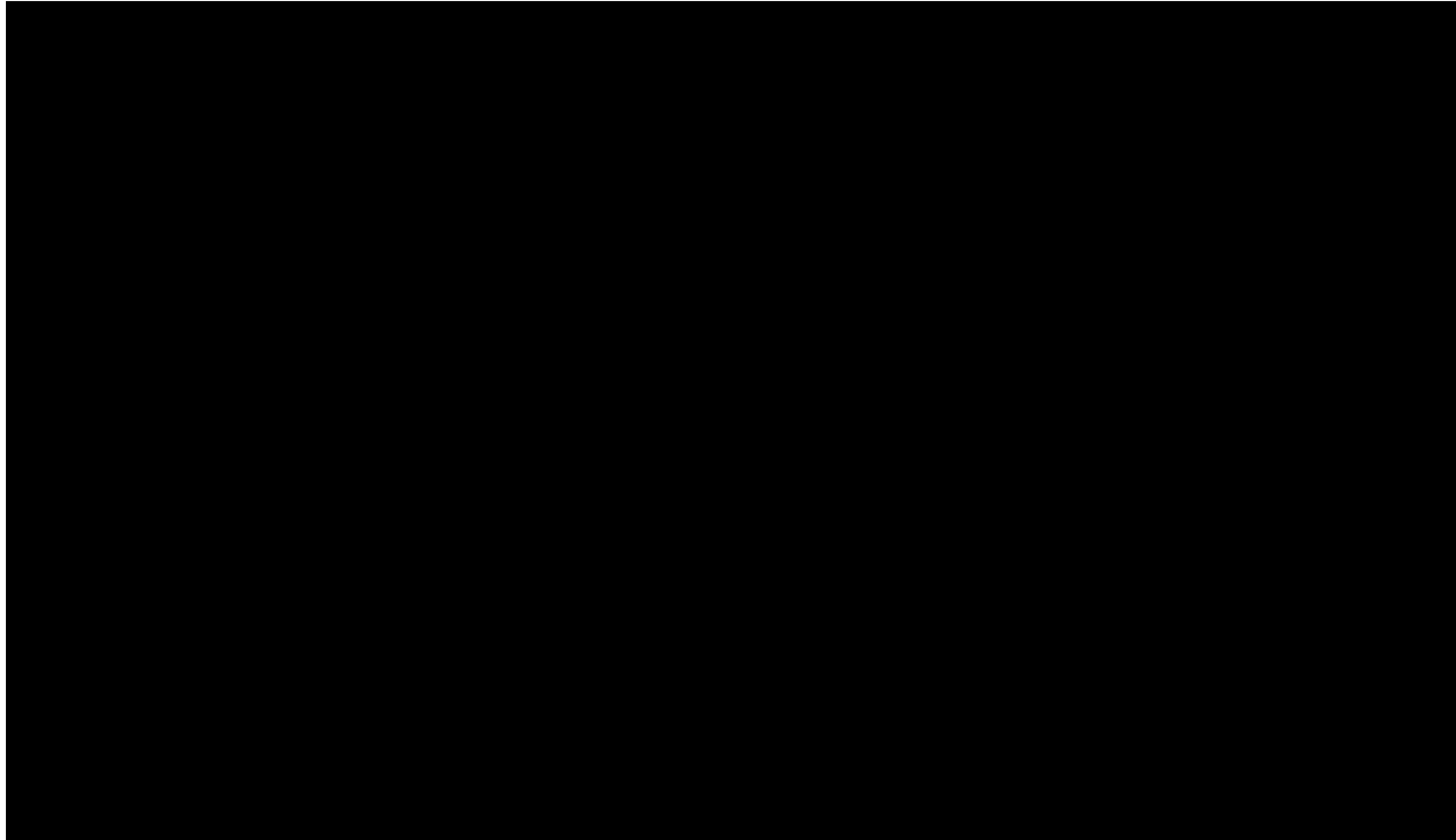
Pictability Training piloted via Zoom with Kinsight, Canada to support Hub formation. To date: **over 200** professionals trained in a range of Family-Centered PD, online and f2f.

## Service Design Integration

Pictability integrated in service design to support family participation, McKenzie Centre, New Zealand.



# Now and Next



## Goal to Action

How to achieve goals using our Five Window Approach

**2. Family Goal**  
Select a family goal and learn how to work towards it.

**3. Child Goal**  
Select a child goal and learn how to work towards it.

**4. Signature Strengths and Personal goals**

**5. Our Oxygen Tank**  
Focusing on the things we can control.

**Positive Psychology**  
Practical tools to help families thrive & flourish



**8. Next Steps**  
How to use the toolkit beyond Now and Next

**1. Set a vision with PICTABILITY**  
For the Family, Child and Self.

**Achievable short term goals** Understand how to break down this vision into "next steps"

**7. Partnerships with Professionals**

**6. PERMA**  
A framework for wellbeing

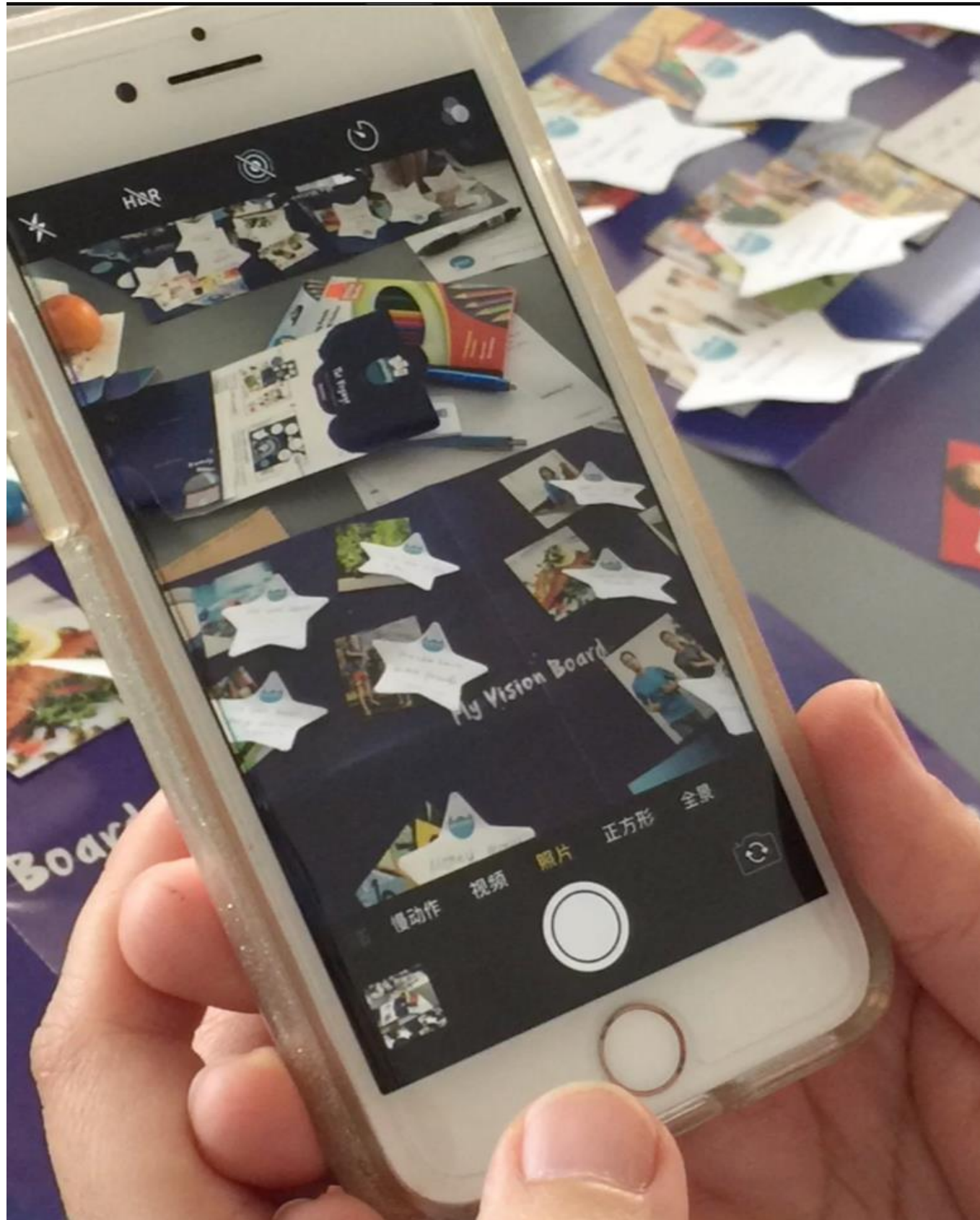
Parent Professional Statement



Educate & empower parents

# Building family participation through formulating a long-term plan



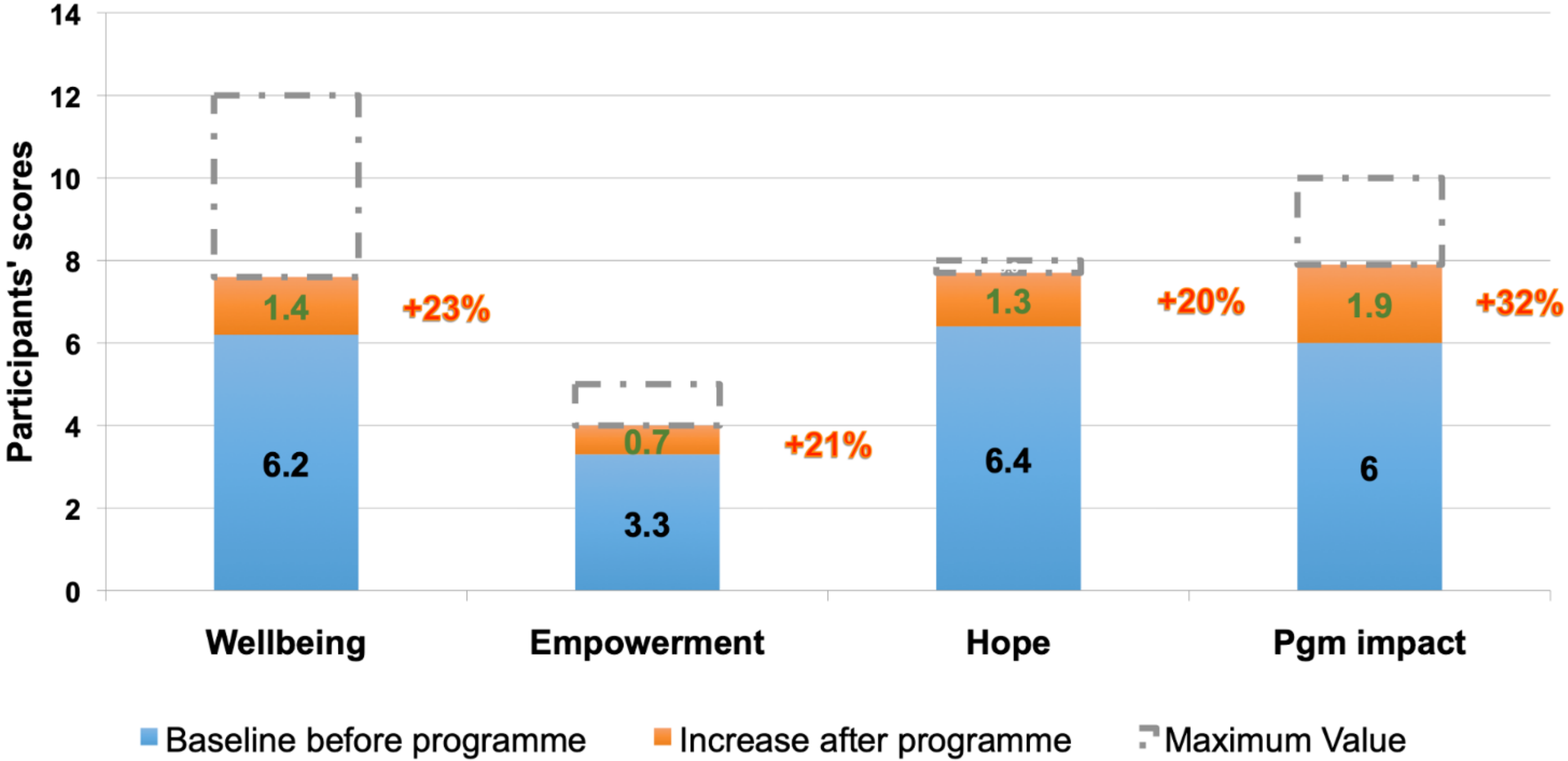


# Families partnering with professionals

- Families formulate their long-term vision
- Families prioritise 3 goals: Child, family and personal
- Families get 'collaborative ready'



# Overview of Now and Next Programme Participants Scores



## Parent-Professional Relationships

The following statement was written by and for parents. It was developed at the inaugural Plumtree Now And Next Alumni Conference April 2017.



### The best partnerships

- have the best interests of our children at their heart;
- are firmly child- and family-centred, reflecting the strengths and needs of our children and our families;
- respect the unique expertise that we, as parents, have as our children's frontline educators;
- equally respect the knowledge and guidance that professionals offer to us and to our children;
- are based on open, honest, and respectful communication between parents, professionals, and children, so that relationships are safe, collaborative and supportive for all parties, and recognise the expectations required of parents, professionals, and children, to achieve the most positive outcomes for our children.

### The best relationships develop when

- parents and professionals together agree upon the most meaningful goals for our children;
- goals are measurable, achievable, and relevant to us as unique individuals;
- we plan together the strategies and processes we will use to implement and achieve our child and family goals;
- we agree on how we will together evaluate our progress;
- professionals support the capacity of our families to implement strategies in the natural settings of our homes and communities, and
- the whole family is empowered to support the achievement of our children's and families' goals.

### Our children need professionals who

- see our children as children, and not as their disability or diagnosis;
- are empathetic, understanding and passionate;
- are flexible, supportive and child-centred in their interactions;
- develop a personal relationship with our children directly;
- develop sessions that are as enjoyable, fun, engaging, relevant and meaningful to our children as individuals as is possible, and
- relate to our children within the frame of their individual interests and strengths.

### We have a responsibility to

- be the most powerful agents for change for our children;
- believe in our own agency as the experts in our children, and embrace our experiences and wisdom as valued and valuable;
- share our expertise with our professional partners to achieve the best outcomes for our children;
- be confident leaders in professional partnerships because of the unique insight that we offer;
- engage in self-education and self-knowledge so that we can continue to be active and informed leaders in our partnerships, and
- share our knowledge and experiences with other parents, so that we can build a strong network of educated and empowered parent leaders who have confidence in their own self-worth and competency.

Compiled by Dr Melanie Heyworth, parent.

Read the full statement at: <https://plumtree.org.au/the-parent-professional-relationship-statement>

## Families leaning into partnerships with professionals

The following statement was written by and for parents of children with disabilities or delays in their development at the second Now and Next Alumni conference 2018.



### When we choose to 'lean in', we understand that...

- professionals are important champions in our journeys, but they cannot replace the role that we have as families;
- we are making an active choice to become leaders for our families, our communities, and ourselves;
- to provide a good life, is to provide a good life not just for our children, but for ourselves, our families, and our communities;
- a good life might include services and systems, but goes far, far beyond them.

### By 'leaning in', we become active partners with professionals and...

- accept a shared responsibility and accountability in maintaining our partnership with professionals;
- respect our professionals' expertise but understand that we, as families, are best placed to lead the team around our child;
- commit to being active recipients of professional expertise, and to being involved partners in our child's therapy;
- share with professionals the area of our expertise, which is our child;
- invest in our own education and ourselves by being active learners since we make the ultimate difference in the lives of our children;
- model for professionals an active, respectful partnership with professionals.

### By 'leaning in', we accept the responsibility to...

- embrace the strengths and interests of our children and use these as a starting point so that they develop their confidence and identity as unique individuals;
- remind others and ourselves that we reject the practice of focusing on what our children cannot do. This 'deficit focus' is outdated and damaging;
- shift the perception of what professionals expect of parents, of our partnerships, and of their role within those relationships, so that we achieve change for other families with whom those professionals work;
- include our professionals in celebrating our children's strengths;
- stimulate the leadership of our families by changing professional perspectives about what families want and what they can achieve.

### By 'leaning in', we embrace the knowledge that...

- we must bring other parents along with us, so that – as a collective voice – we have more impact than we could ever have individually;
- if we leave each other behind, if our professional partnerships are an individual affair, we have achieved only so much;
- together we can make social change; together we can achieve a social movement for realising a better, more inclusive, more accepting world for our children;
- achieving acceptance for our children is the core business of family leadership.

**Conversation with a parent:  
Practical advice on the value of  
working in family centric ways**

# Where this has taken us



**Thank you for joining us today.**

**[sylvana@plumtree.org.au](mailto:sylvana@plumtree.org.au)**