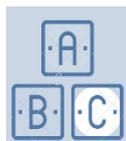




## Western Cape Early Childhood Development Community of Practice

### MEETING HIGHLIGHTS 29 April 2021

Virtual Meeting



#### SETTING THE SCENE

The purpose of this meeting was to explore more deeply, a conversation around the role of parents that had ensued in the previous WC ECD CoP. The CoP had agreed that collectively, a plan on how to initiate a conversation within the sector on the role of parents had to be developed in light of the fact that parents are increasingly becoming critical in closing gaps that children might face particularly in the context of Covid-19.

Kayin Scholtz, the facilitator of the WC ECD CoP welcomed participants and reminded them of the purpose of the meeting. After participants had introduced themselves, two presentations took place and lastly, participants were grouped to come up with a plan looking into a possible seminar hosted by the WC ECD CoP. This seminar was discussed in the last meeting and would be open to the broader sector as a tool to create discussion.

To start the agenda, participants were asked to share any expectations that they might have pertaining to the topic on hand. Pam Picken suggested a database of programmes and interventions that focus on parenting citing that *Do More Foundation* is eager to add to these databases or lists.



#### PEACE DISCIPLINE KAREN QUAIL

Karen is a school counsellor, parent and teacher and works independently as a coach to teachers, parents and caregivers of children. Karen has just completed research that looks into non-violent discipline approaches as part of her Psychology Masters at the University of Cape Town. She makes this information accessible freely through her [Peace Discipline](#) website and [YouTube](#) channel.

Karen began her presentation by making the point that children, in their early years require a host of things besides stimulation to develop optimally.

#### **Children need to feel safe with caregivers, not only at home but at school.**

How do we feel safe? Through connections with those close to us and in the context of education, feeling safe is critical in learning and paying attention. If children are not safe, children are occupied with being safe and this takes away their attention from other things. We

have to help parents and teachers that children have to feel safe if they are to learn and pay attention in their learning environments.

- Secure attachment is vital to human wellbeing-children need to know that they are loved and special.
- Children need a safe base- they use parents as a safe base. When things go wrong, they need to be able to run back to parents for safety, reassurance and comfort.
- It is important that parents with young children know this and guard this position of a 'safe base'. Negative discipline approaches can damage a child's attachment because children start to view parents as the 'unsafe' place.

How do we work with children who have been traumatised or who do not have safe place? A look into the building blocks of secure attachments provides an answer to this question:

**Attunement:** children who develop a secure attachment had parents who are good in attunement which means sensitive responsiveness-parents pick up children's signals and respond appropriately. In the learning environment, teachers whose responses fit with the children's signals tend to have children who perform well and behave better.

**Connection with children:** if we want children to shine, we have to connect with them. So when we experience trouble with children's behaviour, we have to ask ourselves how connected we are to the children.

**Boundaries:** having good attunement and connection is good but both are facilitated through boundaries. When children do not have a sense of containment there will be more challenging behaviour.

*"When the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to treat everything as if it's a nail."*  
[Abraham Maslow]

**Peaceful boundaries are difficult for people with a punitive background where there was no model of positive discipline.**

**Many of us remember feeling contained, but also that the methods used to achieve that were harsh-this leaves us wondering things like: If we do not hit children, will they turn okay?**

**How do we achieve a sense of containment?** ECD practitioners, parents and others, who care for children, have to learn more effective, non-violent methods.

- **A range of positive tools have to be employed**
- **Somethings have to be left behind: shouting, inflicting pain, threatening etc.**

**Research: A systematic overview of the evidence on non-violent discipline options**

Karen took the CoP through the research that looked into non-violent methods of discipline. The problem identified was that parenting skills are often locked away in parenting programmes which are also limited in number and in reach. Karen has been concerned about how to make non-violent skills available to people.

-identified over 200 systematic reviews that covered 4000 studies that were specific to different non-violent skills

-this informs Karen’s resources and workshops that can be found on the website and YouTube Channel as well as her coaching and workshop services

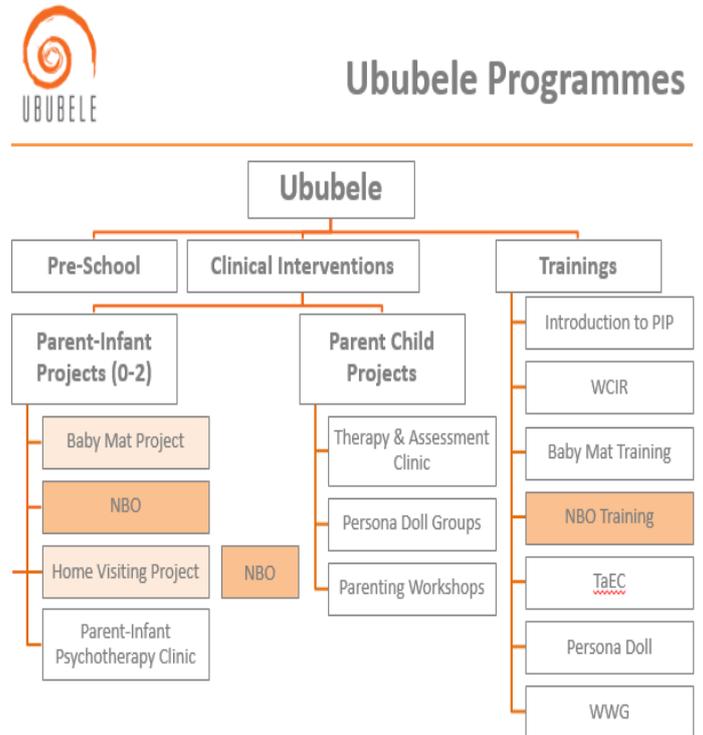


**UBUBELE-Engaging families in Alexandara, Johannesburg, South Africa**

Esther Chungu, the clinical director from Ubebele Education and Psychotherapy Trust is involved in the therapy and assessment clinic at the parent psychotherapy division offering supervisor to the projects.

**Ububele Programmes:**

Ububele has been operating for the past 21 years and aims to improve the emotional development and wellbeing of children, their parents and other caregivers. The organisation works in the community of Alexandra which is marred by numerous socio-economic challenges including poverty, gender based violence and poor levels of education and services. Ububele has traditionally focused on children seven years and below but in time has grown to feature the family and community as central to children’s wellbeing and interventions. Ububele provides an integrated array of services for children, parents, trainers and facilitators in order to support the growth and development of young children.



**Parent-Child programmes at Ububele**

Ububele starts right from birth to promote healthy attachment and one of the ways is through the ‘new born behavioural intervention’ to highlight babies’ uniqueness and competence to mother’s right from the beginning. If parents are aware that children hear their voices and know them from the beginning, then it can spark or initiate secure attachment.

- There is a flagship homevisiting project aimed at pregnant mothers and families. Through these visits, expectant mothers are assessed for risk and prepared for the baby. Conversations about parenting also begin here and the programme is a critical avenue of support which has been required more so than ever due to Covid-19.

- Parenting groups are also facilitated with the focus on building/rebuilding good relationships. A number of parenting programmes are used in the support groups to promote child and parent competencies and strengthen families.
- The Therapy and Assessment clinical is led by the psychologist assisted by intern psychologists and they see children with trauma. Psycho education is also offered and many times are able to identify children with foundational gaps and then assist with appropriate remedies and school placements.
- Ububele also operates a therapeutic preschool which assesses children for school readiness and developmental milestones and regular persona doll emotional literacy groups. This intervention is spearheaded by the clinical psychologist in consultation with teachers to understand where children are.
- Lastly, the Ububele Ubuntu bus goes into a particular part of Alexandra that is under resourced to bring a 'mobile' ECD programme to stimulate the children and also to gain access to parents during visits.

*Covid-19 learnings:*

Loss of income and other impacts of the pandemic have increased risk for families that were already at risk. Some of the services have had to be offered online and visits conducted telephonically. Materials has had to be adjusted to suit the modes of delivery.

To access the full presentation, please click [here](#).

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:**

***Kaathima:*** Not all parents require intensive support; please share more about how parents have responded to short-term and immediate resources.

***Karen:*** Covid-19 shifted the physical workshops to online. Surprisingly, many people are joining and the advantage is having diverse people join meetings at once. Peace Disciplines' online resources are still in the early phases and more learnings still need to be observed.

***Kauthar:*** Does Ububele offer training to other organisations?

***Esther:*** Yes, Ububele can train organisations that are interested in their parent support.

***Thandeka:*** For how long do mothers and children in the Home Visiting receive support?

***Esther:*** Home visiting is 14 weeks; however, they can continue to access the basket of service. Often people return to Ububele and leave again when they feel ready.

***Pam:*** A request to the forum to showcase Do More Foundations' 'one-stop shop' on parenting programmes that are available and for Ububele and Karen to include their information on this website.

**GROUP SESSION AND FEEDBACK:** *Create a draft agenda for a seminar aimed at elevating the role of parents; think about three main points of discussion/topics that you would like covered and who needs to be in the room for this discussion.*

*Members were divided into three groups of five and provided feedback of their brainstorming group activity:*

**Feedback:**

Members from each of the groups gave feedback on the brainstorm session. The following ideas were collectively generated by the WC ECD CoP:

**Topics that were identified:**

- How can we create a referral network across parenting organisations to holistically support parents?
- Creation of a system where organisations can share expertise to better support parents
- A database of organisations providing parenting programmes and care for children
- Information sharing between stakeholders (government, officials, teachers etc.)
- Learnings from the DSD/UNICEF parenting programme pilot that was done through NECDA members
- Positive parenting and parent-child building models

The CoP emphasised that it was important to keep in mind holistic development of a child.

**Who should be in the room?**

- **Parenting programmes/organisations**
- **Government (DSD from a family and child protection perspective since ECD is moving to DBE)**
- **ECD civil society**
- **Other sectors focused on children like GBV etc.**

*The seminar will take place around October/November 2021*

**Way forward and close:**

To carry the plans of the seminar forward, a working group was formed to oversee the planning. The members of this working group include Kauthar Conrad, Kayin Scholtz, Pam Picken, Faadiela Ryklief, Kaathima Ebrahim and Thandeka Rantsi

CoP members were asked to reflect on how they were feeling now that the CoP had taken place. There was a sense of excitement due to the plans established and a sense that there was direction in obtaining the objective to elevate the role of parents.

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

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