

## Early Intervention programs

### Communities for Children

Overcoming social isolation, especially in disadvantaged communities is key to supporting parents and ensuring that caring for children's welfare becomes more of a shared community responsibility. The Benevolent Society is committed to creating caring and inclusive communities, and one of the most effective programs we deliver is [Communities for Children](#).

This Federally funded program brings a range of local service providers together in over 45 communities around Australia and uses collaborative action to build community strength.

As the coordinating partner in 2 NSW communities, The Benevolent Society has worked with other NGOs and local government services to provide a community hub and [award-winning café](#), mobile playgroups, young parents support programs, a door-knocking outreach program and a range of community development initiatives.

Together with our partner agencies we have achieved [positive results](#) including: reduced social isolation for families; improved availability and access to quality early learning and care services; greater personal safety, and more child-friendly areas for families to socialise and gain valuable community connections.

### Brighter Futures

[Brighter Futures](#) is a statewide program funded by NSW Community Services, that provides targeted support for families with young children who are struggling with challenges such as parental drug or alcohol misuse, mental health issues, domestic violence, a lack of social support or child behaviour management problems. Families who take part in the program work with a case manager over an extended period (18 months - 2 years) to access support such as parenting courses, child care, professional home visiting, counselling, supported playgroups, and also practical support to help them access other services and resources in the community.

The program is delivered by [14 non government agencies](#) across NSW. The Benevolent Society runs Brighter Futures in Northern and South-West Sydney, the Central Coast, New England, and Central West NSW.

### Scarba Child Protection

[Scarba](#) is a Benevolent Society child protection service that works with families referred by the Department of Community Services, where the child is at risk of harm. Our services at Bondi, Waterloo and Ingleburn, provide a range of services to ensure that children are safe and receive support to help them heal the impacts of abuse and neglect. Scarba aims to promote positive change for the family by working therapeutically with the family members, through play therapy, counselling and playgroups.

### Integrated early childhood services

The Benevolent Society [Early Years Centres](#) in Queensland offer a wide range of parenting, early childhood education and care, and health services improve children's health and well-being. Research tells us that the early years of a child's life are critical in providing a strong foundation for lifelong learning, positive behaviour, and good health outcomes. Early childhood programs and quality childcare have long term positive outcomes for children which extend into their adult lives and benefit the community as a whole.

### **Integrated early childhood services (cont)**

The Early Years Centres go further than normal childcare centers because they provide a range of services to support the whole family under one roof. These include health clinics, playgroups, breakfast clubs and parent support groups. When families need extra support, the Centres connect them to more targeted help such as one-on-one counselling or speech therapy.

The Centres are funded by the Queensland Department of Education, Training and the Arts in suburbs on the outskirts of Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

In NSW our [Partnerships in Early Childhood](#) (PIEC) approach recognises that childcare centres are ideal environments to engage families and often a place they turn to when needing assistance. PIEC creatively uses childcare centres as a bridge to other community services.

### **Family Referral Service (pilot program)**

Community Services and Health NSW are trialling [Family Referral Services](#) in [Newcastle](#), Mt Druitt and Dubbo as part of the [Keep Them Safe](#) initiatives arising from the Wood Inquiry into Child Protection. They are being run by non-government agencies The Benevolent Society, Relationships Australia and Uniting Care Burnside.

The role of Family Referral Services is to connect families to services in their local area. They will support families who make direct contact asking for help and they will also support families who have been referred by others in the community such as schools, hospitals and childcare facilities.

The children, young people and families supported by the Family Referral Services are those who don't need statutory intervention by Community Services but do need help before problems get bigger. The goal is to provide help to these children and families early rather than see their problems increase with the risk that they may escalate through the child protection system.

These 3 pilot services will be evaluated after 12 months, with the aim of rolling out more services across the state over the next 5 years.

To get help for children and families outside these 3 local areas people can call the Child Protection Helpline: 132 111 for the general public or 133 627 for mandatory reporters.