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THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEW SOUTH WALES



PARTNERSHIPS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROJECT

FINAL REPORT ON DATA COLLECTION ROUND 1

CATHY THOMSON, TOM LONGDEN, LINDA
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SPRC Report 7/07

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Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Overview of PIEC	1
1.2	Project Logic	1
1.3	Anticipated PIEC Outcomes	4
1.4	Overview of PIEC Evaluation	5
1.5	Outline of the Report	5
2	Approach to the Impact Evaluation	7
2.1	Evaluation Questions	7
2.2	Sample	7
2.3	Data Collection	8
3	Child Data	11
3.1	Sample Characteristics	11
3.2	Attachment Relationships: Child-Staff	11
3.3	Attachment Relationships: Child-Parent	12
3.4	Social and Emotional Development	13
3.5	Experience of the Child Care Setting	16
4	Parent Data	18
4.1	Parents' Demographic Characteristics	18
4.2	Parent Community Connectedness and Support	19
4.3	Family relationships and functioning	24
5	Summary	26
	References	27

Tables

Table 1.1: Evaluation Summary	6
Table 2.1 Response Rate.....	7
Table 2.2 Number of parents participating in the evaluation by area.....	8
Table 2.3: Summary of standardised instruments.....	10
Table 3.1: Child characteristics, staff reported	11
Table 3.2: Pianta Student-Teacher Relationship Scale	12
Table 3.3 Pianta Child-Parent Relationship Scores	13
Table 3.4: BITSEA Scores Reported by Parents	14
Table 3.5 SDQ Scores reported by staff	15
Table 3.6 SDQ Scores, by Parents	16
Table 3.7: Leiden Inventory of for Child Wellbeing in Day Care.....	17
Table 4.1: Parent characteristics	19
Table 4.2: Receipt of services for child or family members in the last 12 months	20
Table 4.3: Parents' perceptions of the local neighbourhood.....	22
Table 4.4: Community links	24
Table 4.5: Parenting Self-Efficacy.....	25

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Executive Summary

The Benevolent Society works in partnership with Wyong Shire Council, Campbelltown City Council, KU Children's Services and Lady Gowrie Child Centre to deliver Partnerships in Early Childhood (PIEC) in 14 long day centres and preschools (referred to hereafter as centre-based children's services). The PIEC project is funded under the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, Stronger Families and Communities Strategy (SFCS), Invest to Grow program. The Social Policy Research Centre has been contracted to evaluate the program.

PIEC recognises the critical role that centre-based children's services play in the lives of children, families and communities. Centre-based children's services provide an ideal environment for engaging families and are often somewhere families turn to when they need assistance. PIEC builds on the existing strengths, skills and resources of major child care providers to promote strong, healthy relationships between children, child care centre staff, families and communities.

PIEC achieves this by placing a child and family worker in the child care and preschool setting to train and support staff to increase their understanding of children's behaviours. This, in turn, will improve their ability to support children and their families. The program fosters children's social and emotional development through a relationships approach to intervention. The child and family worker can also assist families with all aspects of parenting and act as a resource person and "bridge" to support services and programs within the local community.

This report summarises the baseline data collected in March 2006 from staff and parents for the impact or outcomes component of the PIEC evaluation. Using a pre- and post-test design changes in relationships between children and staff and children and parents; the social and emotional development of children; and community connectedness will be analysed over time. These areas relate to the Invest To Grow Priority Areas of 'early learning and care' and 'supporting families and parents'

PIEC operates in three communities in New South Wales: the Central Coast, South West Sydney and East Sydney. The analysis in this report is broken down by area to take account of differences between these localities. It is evident that significant differences exist between the areas, most noticeably in demographic characteristics of the parents. Reflecting the characteristics of the area's population, South West Sydney had the highest proportion of parents born overseas, who spoke a language other than English at home, and relied on government pension or benefit as their main source of income, compared to the other areas. These differences will have to be taken into account when analysing changes over time.

The data collection instruments for this component of the evaluation include standardised scales and relevant sections of the questionnaires designed by the National Evaluators that have been adapted from Longitudinal Study of Australian Children. This will enable comparisons population data at the end of the evaluation period. Staff who knew the children best and parents completed the surveys.

The PIEC model is based on research linking high quality interventions that focus on developing secure relationships between child care staff and children and improved outcomes for children, particularly high-risk children. Children who are securely attached to staff display more competent interaction with adults and more advanced

peer play during child care years. Education and support for parents in fostering secure relationships with children will also be conducted. Therefore the evaluation measures focus on changes in the quality of relationships between staff and children, and between parents and children, and follow the social and emotional development of children over the funding period.

Two scales were used to assess *the relationship between staff and children* and *the relationship between parents and children* and to measure any changes in the attitudes and perceptions of adults from limit setting and managing behaviour to a focus on developmental progression. The Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) (Pianta, 2001) is a self-reported assessment of staff's perceptions of the quality their relationship with the children. The baseline data shows that the majority of staff have positive and effective relationships with the children. However, around a fifth of staff indicated they have negative and ineffective relationships with the children. Parents completing the Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS) (Pianta, 2001) indicated over a third have high conflict and over 50 per cent have high dependency levels in their relationships with their children. Approximately one fifth of the Total CPRS scores reported by parents indicate lower overall positivity in their relationships with their children.

Two scales are used to measure changes in children's *social and emotional well-being*. These are age-dependent and the age of the child determines which scale is used at each time period. The Brief Infant Toddler Social Emotional Assessment (BITSEA) is completed by parents and staff for children aged 12 to 36 months. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is completed by parents and staff for children aged three years and over. For the majority of children the scores for both the measures of social and emotional development did not indicate problem behaviours. However, for children aged between 1-3 parents rated around 17 per cent of the sample with high problem and low competence scores indicating *Of Concern* status. For children aged 3 years and over around one-fifth of the sample have difficulty scores in the abnormal range as rated by staff. In contrast only ten per cent of the sample, when scored by parents, have total difficulty scores in the abnormal range.

Access to informal support and links to the community are crucial factors in reducing isolation. Perceptions of the local neighbourhood and the desire to live and bring up children in the local area can be used to gauge social capital and community connectedness. PIEC also aims to link families to relevant support and to the community so the evaluation will track these variables over time. At baseline the majority of parents indicated that their neighbourhoods were safe and clean, they had access to good parks, basic shopping facilities and services and it was a good place to bring up children. However, there were significant differences between the areas with more parents in South West Sydney indicating that they would like to move out of the area, it was not safe for children to play outside and people were unwilling to help their neighbours than parents in East Sydney or the Central Coast.

Data will be collected again in November 2006 and November 2007 so that changes in the various domains can be analysed over time to assess the effectiveness of PIEC in terms of improvement in relationships between children, parents, child care centre staff and communities; increases in social competence and emotional regulation in children; better quality care for children enrolled at the PIEC child care centres and increases in community connectedness and the factors associated with these changes.

1 Introduction

Partnerships in Early Childhood Project (PIEC) aims to build on the existing strengths, skills and resources of major child care providers to promote strong, healthy relationships between children, child care centre staff, families and communities. The Benevolent Society works in partnership with Wyong Shire Council, Campbelltown City Council, KU Children's Services and Lady Gowrie Child Centre to deliver PIEC in 14 centre-based children's services. The PIEC project is funded under the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, Stronger Families and Communities Strategy (SFCS), Invest to Grow program. PIEC operates in communities on the Central Coast, and in Sydney's south eastern and south western suburbs.

1.1 Overview of PIEC

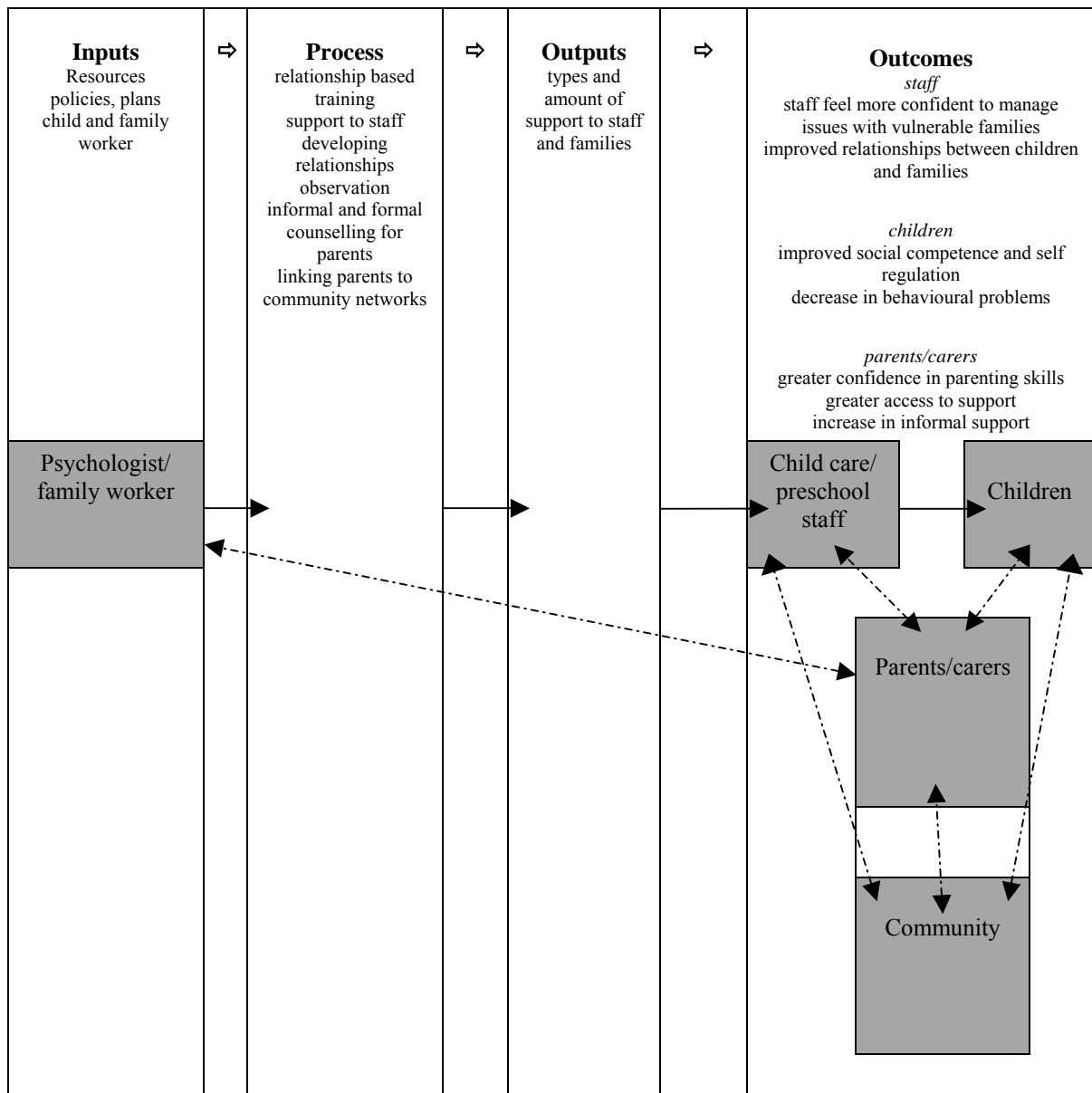
PIEC offers a suite of activities that respond to the needs of the local community and the needs of the children, families and staff in each child care centre. Strategies include:

- placing a family worker or psychologist at the child care centre, working with staff, children and families to identify and support high-need children and families;
- providing staff with hands-on training and supervision to increase their understanding of children's behaviours and relationship needs;
- a focus on the important daily transition moments for children, parents and staff (the children's arrival at and departure from the centre);
- supported playgroups and Parents Connect groups in the local community open to families from the centre and also to families living locally whose children are not enrolled at the centre;
- individual support and counselling for parents;
- parenting mornings, focusing on the needs and strengths of parents (PlayPower workshops for parents are incorporated into these activities); and
- links with other local services providers, connecting families to services and to other community supports.

1.2 Project Logic

The PIEC model is based on evidence that the provision of training and layered supervision and support for staff, using a relationships approach, will increase their understanding of children's behaviours and thereby improves their ability to support children, including high-need children, and their families. This will lead to improved relationships between children, parents, child care centre staff and communities; increased social competence and emotional regulation in children; and better quality care for children enrolled at the PIEC child care centres (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1: Project Logic PIEC



PIEC is developed from Bowlby’s theory of attachment and human development. Children need a secure base to support their exploration of the world and provide reassurance when they return (Bowlby, 1988). Attachment relationships develop through warm, nurturing, responsive and consistent patterns of interaction between children and caregivers. If children do not feel secure in their relationships with the adults in their environment their ability to understand and regulate their own emotional state and to relate to adults and their peers will be hindered. This can lead to delayed or underdeveloped emotional and social development (Hughes, 1998).

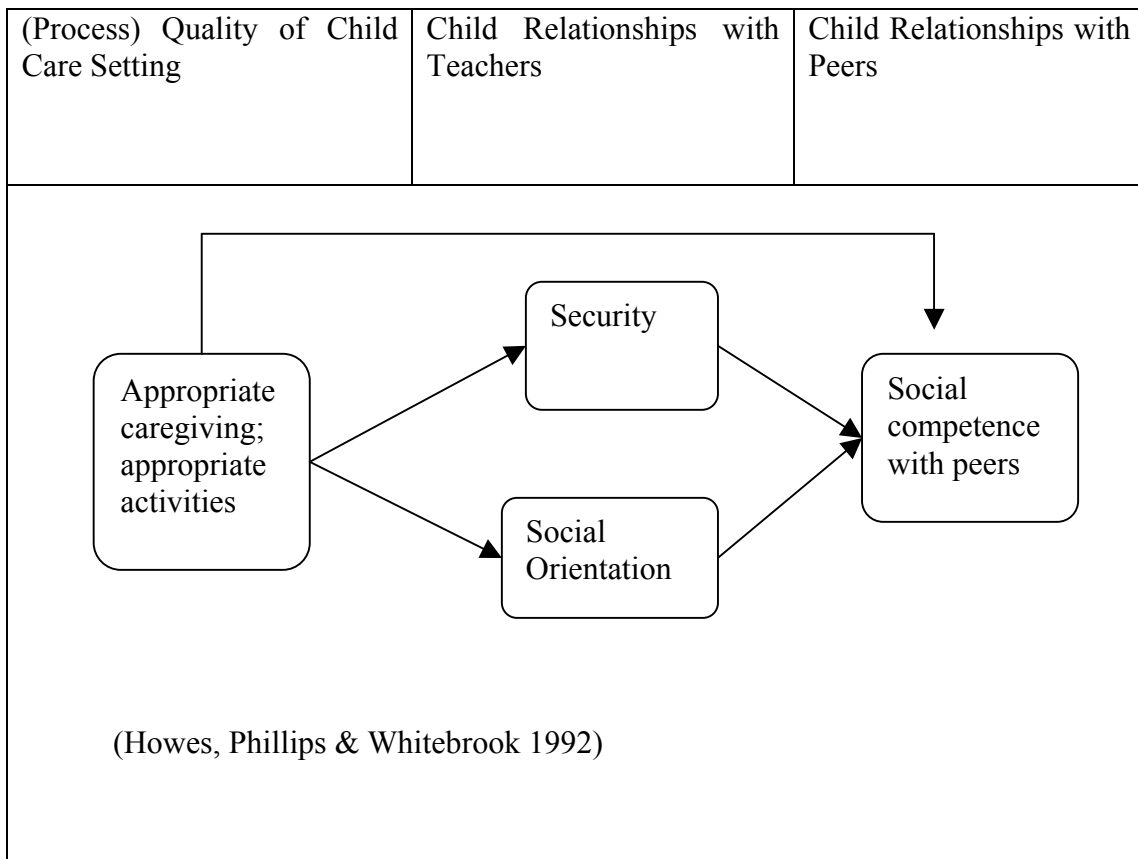
Securely attached children feel confident in the availability of their caregiver when needed, and so develop a sense of self-competence. Secure attachment relationships have been shown to be predictors of social competence, better relationships with teachers and less likelihood of behaviour problems (Wartner et al. 1994). Children who have secure relationships with their child care teachers and caregivers display

more competent interaction with staff and more advanced peer play during the early childhood years. These outcomes are sustained well into the second grade (Howes, 2000; Ladd & Burgess, 1999).

The development of PIEC model is based on research showing that high quality interventions focusing on the development of secure relationships between child care staff and children are linked to improved outcomes for high risk children (Yandell and Hewitt, 1995; Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000). Bowlby’s work focused on child-mother attachment relationships, but children typically form more than one attachment relationship, and may form an attachment with a familiar caregiver in child care. Relationships and attachment in child care settings have been associated with quality of the child care setting, interaction with peers and social competence (Zenah, Stafford & Rice 2005). Attachment theory has been applied to child care settings, hypothesising pathways between the quality of child care, attachment relationships and social competence.

Howes, Phillips and Whitebrook (1992) found that pathways move from the regulatable quality of child care settings (such as adult: child ratios) to the process quality of settings (such as appropriate caregiving and developmentally appropriate activities) to children’s relationships with teachers (securely attached) and peers (social competence). This is illustrated in Figure 1.2. The PIEC intervenes in the *process quality* of child care settings to improve *relationships with teachers* and so *social-emotional regulation* of children.

Figure 1.2: (Simplified) model of pathway from child care quality to social-emotional regulation



In order to develop secure attachment relationships between carers and children, PIEC adopts training, resources and staff supervision from the Circle of Security intervention (Marvin, Cooper, Hoffman and Powell, 2002). This program incorporates Ainsworth's ideas of a Secure Base and a Haven of Safety (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters and Wall, 1978). The child and family worker provides training to staff in attachment concepts that relate to children's exploratory and security needs. Through training and support staff learn how to be emotionally available when a child's attachment system is activated. For example, the child and family worker can work with child care centre staff and parents to better support a child's attachment needs at the difficult transition times of separation and reunion. This enables the staff to help children to experience a smooth transition into the child care centre and hence they are more ready to focus on their exploration and learning.

Attachment relationships are to be supported through changing staff knowledge and understanding (through supporting them to think about children's behaviour in terms of need rather than control) and changing staff behaviour (through encouraging practices that make them more predictable and available to children). Secure attachment relationships are linked to high quality child care.

In addition to fostering secure attachment relationships, PIEC aims to support families with all aspects of parenting. This will be done through connecting isolated families and linking them to appropriate local services and programs. This will lead to improved family capacity and resources and an increase in social and community connectedness. In order to support parents and families in this way, groups such as supported playgroups and parent information and education sessions are run in some centres; and information and referral to services is offered to parents who need it.

The implementation of PIEC varies from site to site. Some have a stronger emphasis on attachment, and some on connecting families to services. In all sites, however, the PIEC worker supports staff in knowing about and responding to children's needs; supports changes in staff behaviour to build attachment relationships; and helps families connect to services and support as needed.

1.3 Anticipated PIEC Outcomes

Based on this model it is anticipated that PIEC will contribute to the following short to medium term outcomes for children, families and child care staff. These outcomes predominantly relate to the Invest to Grow Priority Area of 'early learning and care' and 'supporting families and parents'. These outcomes include:

- Improved relationships between children and their parents, children and other children, and children and child care staff;
- Child care and preschool staff will be better able to foster healthy emotional and social development for all children;
- Increased social competence and emotional self-regulation and a decrease in behavioural problems for children;
- Better quality care for children enrolled at the child care centres;

- Greater confidence in parents about their parenting skills;
- Greater access to support services for parents and informal support for their family;
- Child care centres established as a focal point for families in the community;

1.4 Overview of PIEC Evaluation

The Social Policy Research Centre was contracted to evaluate PIEC. The overall aims of the evaluation include: to provide information that monitors, assists and supports the further development and refinement of the PIEC project (formative/process evaluation); and to assess effectiveness of the PIEC project by monitoring the achievement of positive outcomes for children and families (summative/impact evaluation).

Table 1.1 summarises the evaluation questions, methods, outcomes and data sources. The overall approach is to establish baseline outcome measures in the key Invest to Grow (ITG) priority areas of ‘early learning and care’ and ‘supporting families and parents’, in relation to child and family functioning and ratings of relationships between children, child care centre staff, families and communities. Changes in these dimensions will be measured over the funding period. The evaluation includes three components of data collection and analysis.

The *impact evaluation* assesses whether the project has achieved positive outcomes for children, families, staff and key stakeholders in the Invest to Grow priority area of ‘early learning and care’ and ‘supporting families and parents’.

The formative or *process* component of the evaluation focuses on the development and implementation of the PIEC Project. It will monitor the extent to which services are delivered in the form envisaged by the Benevolent Society. Where the results of the project are not those envisaged, the evaluation design seeks to inform current and future developments of PIEC.

Performance based monitoring: the Invest to Grow Performance Indicators as devised by FACS and the progress monitoring template developed by the National Evaluators will form the basis for developing the results-based measures for this component of the evaluation. More information about the evaluation can be found in the PIEC Evaluation Framework.

1.5 Outline of the Report

This report summarises the baseline data collected as part of the summative or impact component of the evaluation. The following section describes the overall approach to the impact evaluation. Baseline data collected from staff and parents about attachment relationships between children and staff and children and parents and the children’s social and emotional development of the children is outlined in Section 3. Information about parents and caregivers including their demographics characteristics, family relationships, perceptions of parenting skills, access to support and community connectedness is described in Section 4. The final section of the report summarises the baseline data.

Table 1.1: Evaluation Summary

Invest to Grow Priority Area	Evaluation Question	Evaluation Component	PIEC Program Outcomes	Data Sources
Early learning and care	Has PIEC achieved its objectives?	Impact Evaluation	Improved relationships between staff and children, children and children, child to parent	Pinata’s Reflective Functioning scale; Pianta’s Teacher-child relationship scale; staff interviews; Service data collected periodically
			Increase in children’s social competence and emotional regulation	BITSEA; Strengths and Difficulties Q
Supporting families and parents	Has PIEC achieved its objectives?	Impact Evaluation	Better quality care for children enrolled at the child care centres	BITSEA; Strengths and Difficulties Q; Service Users Q; parent interviews
			Greater confidence in parenting skills	Pinata’s parent-child relationship scale; Service Users Q; parent interviews
			Greater access to support services for parents and informal supports for their family	Service Users Q; parent interviews
			Child care centres established as a focal point for families in the community	Service Users Q; parent interviews
Early learning and care; Supporting parents and families	What factors supported or impeded the achievement of these objectives?	Project Logic, Process Evaluation	All outcomes	Document analysis; Key personnel interviews; Child care staff interviews or focus groups; Family interviews; Case studies
	What factors facilitated and inhibited the project logic model being implemented?			
Early learning and care; Supporting parents and families	What are the most important factors which facilitate improved outcomes?	Impact Evaluation, Process Evaluation	All outcomes	Document analysis; Key personnel interviews; Child care staff interviews or focus groups; Family interviews; Case studies Service data collected periodically; BITSEA; Strengths and Difficulties Q; Service Users Q;
	Is the PIEC effective for all children and families?	Performance Based Monitoring, Impact Evaluation		

2 Approach to the Impact Evaluation

This component of the evaluation will assess the impact or outcomes of the project using a pre-test and post-test design. The overall approach is to establish baseline outcome measures in the key Invest to Grow (ITG) priority areas of ‘early learning and care’ and ‘supporting families and parents’, in relation to child and family functioning and ratings of relationships between children, child care centre staff, families and communities. Changes in these dimensions will be measured over the funding period.

2.1 Evaluation Questions

This component of the evaluation is designed to address the following questions:

- What were the short-term and medium-term outcomes of the project in the relevant Invest to Grow priority areas?
- What worked for whom and under what circumstances?
- Are further outcomes anticipated?
- In addition to PIEC what other factors were involved in achievement of outcomes?
- Have there been unanticipated outcomes, positive and negative?

2.2 Sample

Data have been collected from parents and staff in the fourteen child care centres involved in PIEC. The possible sample for the evaluation was every child aged 12 months and over, who attends a centre two days or more a week. Data was only collected for children whose parents had given written consent. The total response for the baseline data collection, as completed by staff is shown in Table 2.1. A total of 544 are included in the sample. Table 2.2 shows that 420 parents participated in this round of data collection. This number is lower than the total number of children in the sample as some had more than one child at the centre and others gave consent for their children to be involved in the evaluation but did not complete the parent component of the questionnaire.

Table 2.1 Response Rate

	Total no children aged 12mths over more attending 2 days or more per week	Possible sample No.	Total response rate Per cent
Central Coast	206		
East Sydney	192	276	70
South West Sydney	146		
Total	544		

Table 2.2 Number of parents participating in the evaluation by area

	Number Parents	%
Central Coast	139	33.10
East Sydney	186	44.29
South West Sydney	95	22.62
Total	420	100.1 round these figures to the nearest %

2.3 Data Collection

The data collection instruments use standardised scales and appropriate sections of the questionnaires developed by the National Evaluators to collect data from child care staff and their parents/carers about themselves and the children for whom they care. These instruments were designed to be self-completed. However, PIEC staff were available to assist staff and families to complete the surveys if necessary.

Standardised instruments

Standardised psychological scales were used in the surveys to measure anticipated changes in the relationship between children and staff, between children and parents, and in the social-emotional development of children.

Two scales were used to assess *the relationship between staff and children* and *the relationship between parents and children* and to measure any changes in the attitudes and perceptions of adults from limit setting and managing behaviour to a focus on developmental progression. Only staff who knew the children the best and parents completed these instruments. As these standardised scales required some familiarity with the child it was not possible to externally validate the scores.

The Pianta Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) is completed by staff. The STRS is a teacher-reported measure of the quality of the teacher's relationship with a child. It includes 28 statements concerning a teacher's feelings about his or her relationship with a child, the child's behaviours with a teacher, and the teacher's beliefs about the child's feelings toward the teacher. There is substantial evidence of associations between teachers' ratings of children's conflict, closeness, and dependency, and children's academic and social-emotional outcomes (Mashburn & Pianta 2006).

The Pianta Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS) is a modified STRS scale and completed by parents. It is designed to assess the parent's perception of the quality of the relationship with their child.

The Pianta STRS and the CTRS are not age-dependent and are used on all children.

Two scales are used to measure changes in children's *social and emotional well-being*. These are age-dependent and the age of the child determines which scale is used at each time period.

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is completed by parents and staff for children aged three years and over. This is a UK measure that has been adapted for Australian use and it assesses a child's social and emotional well-being. It consists of 25 items filled out by parents and by teachers/carers. Items fall under five scales: emotional symptoms scale, conduct problems, hyperactivity scale, peer problems scale, and pro-social scale. These scales measure changes in children's cognitive development, social competence and emotional regulation. The SDQ is available in over 30 languages and is being widely used in epidemiological, developmental and clinical research, as well as in routine clinical and educational practice (Goodman & Scott 1999).

The Brief Infant Toddler Social Emotional Assessment (BITSEA) is completed by parents and staff for children aged 12 to 36 months. The BITSEA identifies emerging social-emotional problems in infants and toddlers. It has been shown to be a reliable and valid brief screener for infant-toddler social-emotional and behavioural problems and delays in competence (Briggs-Gowan et al. 2004).

One scale is used to assess the *child's experience of the child care setting*. The Leiden Inventory for the Child's Wellbeing in Day Care (LICW-D) is a Dutch measure developed to assess children's adjustment in their child care setting. It consists of 12 items rated on a 6-point Likert scale. Four aspects of well-being in day care are included in the Inventory: general well-being, well-being in the presence of caregivers, with group members, and within the physical care setting. As such, it provides a sensitive measure of the quality of the child's child care experience (Schipper, IJzendoorn & Tavecchio 2004). The LICW-D will be used to measure changes in adjustment over the course of the intervention.

All of these scales can be used as continuous variables so that changes in the aggregate scores can be analysed over time. It is also possible to classify the scores according to critical cut off points. The following analysis of the baseline data uses these cut off points for convenience to indicate possible problem behaviours. More complex statistical analysis using the continuous variables will be conducted over the course of the evaluation.

Table 2.3: Summary of standardised instruments

Name	Age of child	Completed by	Domain
Pianta Child-Teacher Relationship Scale	All	Staff	Relationships and attachment
The Pianta Child-Parent Relationship Scale	All	Parents	Relationships and attachment
Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)	36 months+	Parents and Staff	Social and emotional well-being
Brief Infant Toddler Social Emotional Assessment (BITSEA)	12-36 months	Parents and Staff	Social and emotional well-being
Leiden Inventory for the Child's Wellbeing in Day Care (LICW-D)	All	Staff	Quality of child care experience

Other information

Demographic information was also collected from parents and staff at baseline. Staff were asked about their qualifications, level of education, how long they had been employed at the child care centre of preschool. Parents were asked country of birth, education, current work status and household income, questions about their parenting self-efficacy, perceptions of the local neighbourhood and access to services and support.

Questions on parenting and relationships were adapted from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC). This will enable comparison with broad population data in the final phase of data collection. These questions elicit information on family functioning.

Questions on community connectedness and access to services were adapted from the National Evaluation of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy and LSAC. These questions elicit information on social capital. This information also gives important contextual information on the environment in which PIEC is being implemented.

The following sections of the report summarise the baseline data collected in March 2006 from staff and parents.

3 Child Data

Data was collected on the characteristics of children; relationships between children and staff; relationships between children and parents; and any emergent problems in social-emotional and behavioural domains.

3.1 Sample Characteristics

Staff in all the centre-based children's services involved in PIEC completed surveys for children whose parents had provided written consent. In most cases staff who knew the child best completed the surveys, which contained general information about the child including their age, gender and the number of days they attended the centre. This information is displayed in Table 3.1 and shows that just over half the sample are boys, with the majority aged over 3 years and attending child care or preschool for 3 days or more. The number of children per age category and the number of days children attended varied significantly across the areas. These differences will have to be taken into account when analysing changes over time.

Table 3.1: Child characteristics, staff reported

	Number				Per cent			
	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas
<i>Gender</i>								
Male	102	100	77	279	49.5	52.1	52.7	51.3
Female	104	92	69	265	50.5	47.9	47.3	48.7
Total	206	192	146	544				
<i>Age of child</i>								
1 year old	18	23	16	57	8.7	12.2	11.2	10.4*
2 years	33	42	41	116	16.0	22.2	28.7	21.6*
3 years	68	51	41	160	33.0	27.0	28.7	29.7*
4 years	72	64	43	179	35.0	33.9	30.1	33.3*
5 years	15	9	2	26	7.3	4.8	1.4	4.8*
Total	206	189	143	538				
<i>No. days child attending</i>								
2 Days	95	73	71	239	46.3	38.6	48.6	44.3*
3 Days	65	79	41	185	31.7	41.8	28.1	34.3*
4 Days	23	25	13	61	11.2	13.2	8.9	11.3*
5 Days	22	12	21	55	10.7	6.4	14.4	10.2*
Total†	205	189	146	540				

Note: * ($X^2 p \leq 0.05$)

† Totals are not identical for all tables due to missing values for some questions and different sample sizes for age-specific instruments

3.2 Attachment Relationships: Child-Staff

The Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) (Pianta, 2001) is a self-reported assessment of staff's perceptions of the quality their relationship with the children. The STRS can be used for children of preschool age up to eight years. Child-teacher relationships in the STRS are defined in terms of conflict, closeness and dependency and overall quality of the relationship. Percentiles at or above 75 for the conflict and dependency subscales indicate high levels of conflict and dependency in the

relationship between staff and the child. For closeness and Total STRS scores percentiles at or below 25 indicate low levels of closeness and low levels of positive and effective relationships. Pianta uses these cut-offs as markers for recommending intervention and support for teachers. Table 3.2 shows that the majority of staff's ratings of their relationship with the children they care for fall outside the critical cut off points for all subscales and Total STRS scores. However 16 per cent and 11 per cent of staff report high conflict and high dependency respectively in their relationship with a child (at or above the 75th percentile on the Conflict or Dependency subscales). Thirty-four per cent of staff report low closeness and 19 per cent of staff scores fall at or below 25th percentile on the Total STRS scores. There were no significant differences in the subscales or the Total STRS scores between the areas.

Table 3.2: Pianta Student-Teacher Relationship Scale

	Number				Per cent			
	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas
<i>Conflict</i>								
High conflict (above 75 th percentile of normative sample)	30	31	28	89	14.4	16.2	19.2	16.3
Low conflict	178	160	118	456	85.6	83.8	80.8	83.7
Total number	208	191	146	545				
<i>Closeness</i>								
Low closeness (below 25 th percentile of normative sample)	66	63	57	186	32.0	33.0	39.0	34.3
High closeness	140	128	89	357	68.0	67.0	61.0	65.8
Total number	206	191	146	543				
<i>Dependency</i>								
High dependency (above 75 th percentile of normative sample)	17	25	20	62	8.2	13.1	13.7	11.4
Low dependency	191	166	126	483	91.8	86.9	86.3	88.6
Total number	208	191	146	545				
<i>Total STRS</i>								
Negative and ineffective relationships (below 25 th percentile of normative sample)	38	34	34	106	18.5	17.8	23.3	19.5
Positive and effective relationships	168	157	112	437	81.6	82.2	76.7	80.5
Total number	206	191	146	543				

Note: Percentiles from the raw scores have been calculated using the Total Normative Sample Percentile Conversions

Note: * ($X^2 p \leq 0.05$)-there were no significant differences between the areas

3.3 Attachment Relationships: Child-Parent

The Pianta Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS) assesses the parent's perception of the quality of the relationship with their child. It is interesting to note that the scores outlined in Table 3.3 differ from those of the staff's ratings of their relationships with the children (Table 3.2). It can be seen that over a third of parents report they have high conflict and over 50 per cent have high dependency levels in

their relationships with their children, indicated by the subscale scores coming in at or above the 75 percentile. Approximately one fifth of the Total STRS scores reported by parents indicate lower overall positivity in their relationships with their children. No significant differences between the areas were evident in any of the subscales or the Total CPRS scores.

Table 3.3 Pianta Child-Parent Relationship Scores

	Number				Per cent			
	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas
<i>Conflict</i>								
High conflict (above 75 th percentile of normative sample)	48	63	38	149	35.6	33.9	40.4	35.9
Low conflict	87	123	56	266	64.4	66.1	59.6	64.1
Total number	135	186	94	415				
<i>Closeness</i>								
Low closeness (below 25 th percentile of normative sample)	5	7	6	18	3.7	3.8	6.5	4.3
High closeness	130	179	87	396	96.3	96.2	93.5	95.7
Total number	135	186	93	414				
<i>Dependency</i>								
High dependency (above 75 th percentile of normative sample)	74	96	60	230	54.8	51.6	63.8	55.4
Low dependency	61	90	34	185	45.2	48.4	36.2	44.6
Total number	135	186	94	415				
<i>Total STRS</i>								
Negative and ineffective relationships (below 25 th percentile of normative sample)	32	37	27	96	23.9	19.9	29.0	23.2
Positive and effective relationships	102	149	66	317	76.1	80.1	70.0	76.8
Total number	134	186	93	413				

Note: * ($\chi^2 p \leq 0.05$)

Percentiles from the raw scores have been calculated using the Total Normative Sample Percentile Conversions

3.4 Social and Emotional Development

Two standardised scales are used to capture the social and emotional development of the children as outlined in Section 2.3. The SDQ is used for children aged 3 years and above and the BITSEA is used for children aged from 12 to 36 months. Staff and parents complete these instruments.

The BITSEA is designed as a screening instrument to identify children under 3 years of age who may be experiencing problems in the social-emotional and behavioural domains of development. A high Total Problem Score (at or above 75th percentile) or low Competence Total Score (at or below 15th percentile) indicate *Of Concern* status. Table 3.4 shows BITSEA scores reported by parents. Around 17 per cent of the sample of children had high problem scores and low competence scores indicating *Of Concern* status. More parents in South West Sydney rated their children as having high problem and low competence total scores indicating greater levels of social-emotional or behavioural problems than the other areas.

Table 3.4: BITSEA Scores Reported by Parents

	Number				Per cent			
	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas
High Problem (scores fall at or above 25 th percentile)	6	10	8	24	13.3	16.9	20.0	16.7
Not of concern	39	49	32	122	86.7	83.1	80.0	83.3
<i>Total number</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>144</i>				
Low Competence (scores fall at or below 15 th percentile)	5	8	9	24	11.4	13.8	22.5	16.9
Not of concern	39	50	31	118	88.6	86.2	77.5	83.1
<i>Total number</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>142</i>				

Note: * ($X^2 p \leq 0.05$)

The staff form of the BITEA parallels the parent form. At this stage, however, due to the small sample size of the comparison group the publisher has not provided cut off scores and *T* scores. If comparison scores are not available by the second round of data collection the analysis will use differences in the mean scores for the problem and competence scores to examine changes over time.

The SDQ is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire that asks about 25 attributes, some positive and others negative. Scores are normally used as continuous variables, but can be classified for convenience as 'normal', 'borderline' and 'abnormal'. Approximately 10 per cent of a community sample scores in the abnormal band for any given score, with a further 10 per cent scoring in the borderline band. Table 3.5 shows the SDQ scores broken down into normal, borderline and abnormal, as reported by staff. On average approximately one fifth of the children have total difficulties scores at the abnormal range. Around 18 per cent of the conduct and hyperactivity subscales and 17 per cent for the peer problem subscales scores are in the abnormal range. Staff in South West Sydney and on the Central Coast have indicated significantly higher levels of total difficulties, conduct and hyperactivity problems in children attending their centres than East Sydney.

Table 3.5 SDQ Scores reported by staff

Staff completed	Number				Per cent			
	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas
<i>Total Difficulties</i>								
Normal	101	91	53	245	70.1	77.1	60.2	70.0*
Borderline	11	8	15	34	7.6	6.8	17.1	9.7*
Abnormal	32	19	20	71	22.2	16.1	22.7	20.3*
Total number	144	118	88	350				
<i>Emotional Symptoms</i>								
Normal	132	108	79	319	91.7	91.5	89.8	91.1
Borderline	3	4	6	13	2.0	3.4	6.8	3.7
Abnormal	9	6	3	18	6.3	5.1	3.4	5.1
Total number	144	118	88	350				
<i>Conduct Problems</i>								
Normal	106	99	59	264	73.6	83.2	67.1	75.2*
Borderline	10	8	5	23	6.9	6.7	5.7	6.6*
Abnormal	28	12	24	64	19.4	10.1	27.3	18.2*
Total number	144	119	88	351				
<i>Hyperactivity Score</i>								
Normal	100	100	66	266	69.4	83.3	75.0	75.6*
Borderline	12	6	2	20	8.3	5.0	2.3	5.7*
Abnormal	32	14	20	66	22.2	11.7	22.7	18.8*
Total number	144	120	88	352				
<i>Peer Problem</i>								
Normal	106	86	60	252	73.6	71.7	68.2	71.6
Borderline	15	14	11	40	10.4	11.7	12.5	11.4
Abnormal	23	20	17	60	16.0	16.7	19.3	17.1
Total number	144	120	88	352				
<i>Prosocial Score</i>								
Normal	80	66	59	205	55.6	56.4	67.1	58.7
Borderline	29	24	8	61	20.1	20.5	9.1	17.5
Abnormal	35	27	21	83	24.3	23.1	23.9	23.8
Total	144	117	88	349				
<i>Total impact score</i>								
Normal	131	118	78	327	90.3	97.5	90.7	92.9*
Borderline	2	1	6	9	1.4	0.8	7.0	2.6*
Abnormal	12	2	2	16	8.3	1.7	2.3	4.6*
Total number	145	121	86	352				

Note: * (X^2 $p \leq 0.05$)

Table 3.6 shows SDQ scores reported by parents. Overwhelmingly most children fall within the normal range for all subscales and the total difficulties score. Ten per cent of the sample fell in the abnormal range for total difficulties score. Around 20 per cent of the children are rated in the abnormal range for hyperactivity and 16 per cent in the abnormal range for peer problems. There are stark differences between the areas, most noticeably in the total difficulties scores and the conduct subscales with South West Sydney having the highest number of abnormal scores and East Sydney the lowest.

Table 3.6 SDQ Scores, by Parents

Parent completed	Number				Per cent			
	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas
<i>Total Difficulties</i>								
Normal	71	110	37	218	79.8	89.4	69.8	82.3*
Borderline	6	8	5	19	6.7	6.5	9.4	7.2*
Abnormal	12	5	11	28	13.5	4.1	20.8	10.6*
Total	89	123	53	265				
<i>Emotional Symptoms</i>								
Normal	81	108	44	233	90.0	87.8	83.0	87.6
Borderline	1	6	4	11	1.1	4.9	7.6	4.1
Abnormal	8	9	5	22	8.9	7.3	9.4	8.3
Total	90	123	53	266				
<i>Conduct Problems</i>								
Normal	59	96	27	182	65.6	78.1	50.9	68.4*
Borderline	8	12	9	29	8.9	9.7	17.0	10.9*
Abnormal	23	15	17	55	25.6	12.2	32.1	20.7*
Total	90	123	53	266				
<i>Hyperactivity Score</i>								
Normal	68	109	40	217	75.6	88.6	75.5	81.6
Borderline	9	7	4	20	10.0	5.7	7.6	7.5
Abnormal	13	7	9	29	14.4	5.7	17.0	10.9
Total	90	123	53	266				
<i>Peer Problem</i>								
Normal	67	91	32	190	74.4	74.0	60.4	71.4
Borderline	12	13	7	32	13.3	10.6	13.2	12.0
Abnormal	11	19	14	44	12.2	15.5	26.4	16.5
Total	90	123	53	266				
<i>Prosocial Score</i>								
Normal	75	110	43	228	83.3	89.4	81.1	85.7
Borderline	12	4	6	22	13.3	3.3	11.3	8.3
Abnormal	3	9	4	16	3.3	7.3	7.6	6.0
Total	90	123	53	266				
<i>Total impact score</i>								
Normal	86	121	48	255	95.6	98.4	90.6	95.9
Borderline	2	1	1	4	2.2	0.8	1.9	1.5
Abnormal	2	1	4	7	2.2	0.8	7.6	2.6
Total	90	123	53	266				

Note: * (χ^2 $p \leq 0.05$)

3.5 Experience of the Child Care Setting

The Leiden Inventory assesses caregivers' or teachers' perceptions of how comfortable the child is in the child care centre or preschool, using a 6-point scale. Questions rate the child's feelings and behaviours, in general and as seen in their interactions with staff, other children, and with the play environment. A total scale score is formed by summing ratings for each of the 12 items. For most children, staff ratings of wellbeing were good to high; that is, equivalent to 4, 5 or 6 on the 6-point scale. For about 15 per cent of children, however, ratings of wellbeing were less than optimal; that is, less than 4 on the 6-point scale. Scores differed by area, being

significantly higher for centres on the Central Coast. There was no difference in scores for the two Sydney areas.

Table 3.7: Leiden Inventory of for Child Wellbeing in Day Care

	Number				Per cent			
	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas
Poor overall wellbeing (total score falls below 48, equivalent to less than 4 on the 6- point scale)	17	38	26	81	8.1	19.8	19.7	14.8*
Good to high overall wellbeing (total score of 48 or above, equivalent to 4 and above on the 6-point scale)	193	154	121	468	91.9	80.2	82.3	85.2*
Total number	210	192	147	549				
Mean total score	60.0	55.4	57.5	57.7**				

Note: * (χ^2 $p \leq 0.05$)

** (F ratio $p \leq 0.01$; Central Coast > East Sydney, South West Sydney; East Sydney = South West Sydney)

4 Parent Data

This section reports on parent characteristics and their parenting self-efficacy and links to support and the community. These relate to the ITG Priority Area of ‘supporting children and families’ and four PIEC objectives:

- Greater confidence in parenting skills
- Greater access to support services for parents and informal supports for their family
- Child care centres established as a focal point for families in the community
- Better integrated services system

4.1 Parents’ Demographic Characteristics

Basic demographic information was collected from parents and caregivers. Table 4.1 shows that there were significant differences between the areas for all variables except Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin. The majority of parents or caregivers in the sample were born in Australia. South West Sydney had the highest proportion of parents or caregivers born overseas (32%) and who spoke a language other than English at home (28 %) compared to the other areas. Over 40 per cent of parents in East Sydney had completed a university degree with an additional 26 per cent completing a TAFE or college diploma. In contrast, Year 10 was the highest level of education completed for just over a third of the parents on the Central Coast and in South West Sydney. Over 60 per cent of parents were employed either full-time or parent time on the Central Coast and in East Sydney compared to around 40 per cent in South West Sydney. Reflecting the current employment status, it can be seen that in South West Sydney over a third of parents relied on government pensions or benefits as their main source of income in contrast to East Sydney where this was the case for only 6 per cent of the sample.

Table 4.1: Parent characteristics

	Number				Per cent			
	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas
<i>Country of birth</i>								
Australia	119	131	64	314	85.6	71.2	68.1	75.3*
Overseas	20	53	30	103	14.4	28.8	31.9	24.7*
<i>Language spoken at home</i>								
English	131	151	68	350	94.9	83.9	72.3	85.0*
Other	7	29	26	62	5.1	16.1	27.7	15.1*
<i>Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin</i>								
Yes	4	5	3	12	3.0	2.8	3.5	3.0
No	131	171	84	386	97.0	97.2	96.6	97.0
<i>Highest Level of Education</i>								
University Degree	22	76	21	119	15.9	41.8	22.1	28.7*
TAFE/college diploma	32	48	15	95	23.2	26.4	15.8	22.9*
Vocational certificate	12	14	6	32	8.7	7.7	6.3	7.7*
Year 12 or equivalent	21	30	19	70	15.2	16.5	20.0	16.9*
Year 10 or equivalent or below	51	14	34	99	37.0	7.7	35.8	23.9*
<i>Current status</i>								
Full-time paid work	38	35	21	94	27.7	19.0	22.8	22.8*
Part-time paid work	46	82	18	146	33.6	44.6	19.6	35.4*
On leave from paid work	5	9	3	17	3.7	4.9	3.3	4.1*
Full-time parent	25	37	25	87	18.6	20.1	27.2	21.1*
Studying	11	9	8	28	8.0	4.9	8.7	6.8*
Other	12	12	17	41	8.8	6.5	18.5	9.9*
<i>Household's main source of income</i>								
Wages/Salaries	95	158	50	303	73.6	88.3	57.5	76.7*
Govt benefit, pension or allowance	29	10	31	70	22.5	5.6	35.6	17.7*
Other	5	11	6	22	3.9	6.2	6.9	5.6*

Note: * ($\chi^2 p \leq 0.05$)

4.2 Parent Community Connectedness and Support

Parents were asked to nominate the kinds of services they had used in the last 12 months, the reasons for lack of service use if any, and their views of the local neighbourhood. These questions elicit information about community amenity, social isolation and support. It is anticipated that PIEC will increase access to services and support for families who need it.

Table 4.2 shows that participation in services specific to being a parent was higher in Central Coast and Eastern Sydney than South West Sydney. Around 31 per cent of Central Coast parents and 40 per cent of Eastern Sydney parents participated in a playgroup, compared to around 15 per cent in South West Sydney. Use of general and family medical services (GP, early childhood nurse) was also lowest in South West Sydney. Use of counselling services was highest in the Central Coast. In contrast, psychiatric service use and welfare/community service was highest in South West Sydney. Around eight per cent of South West Sydney families used charities, compared to around two and four per cent for Eastern and Central Coast families respectively.

Table 4.2: Receipt of services for child or family members in the last 12 months

	Number				Per cent			
	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas
<i>Type of service</i>								
Playgroup or parent-child group	43	75	14	132	30.9	40.3	14.7	31.4
Parenting education courses or programs, Parent support groups	28	32	9	69	20.1	17.2	9.5	16.4
Maternal and child health nurse	37	51	22	110	26.6	27.4	23.2	26.2
Hospital emergency ward	69	79	42	190	49.6	42.5	44.2	45.2
Hospital outpatient clinic	32	48	22	102	23.0	25.8	23.3	24.2
GP services	125	170	76	371	89.4	91.4	80.0	88.3
Adult mental health services	4	8	4	16	2.9	4.3	4.2	3.8
Migrant or ethnic resource services	0	4	0	4	0.0	2.2	0.0	1.0
Speech therapy	43	26	10	79	30.9	14.0	10.5	18.8
Dental services	47	102	25	174	33.8	54.8	26.4	41.4
Paediatrician	39	39	33	111	28.1	21.0	34.7	26.4
Other medical specialists	46	63	25	134	33.1	33.9	26.3	31.9
Other medical services	23	30	9	62	16.6	16.1	9.5	14.8
Disability services	4	6	3	13	2.9	3.2	3.2	3.1
Church or religious groups	22	31	15	68	15.8	16.7	15.8	16.2
Counselling services	22	13	9	44	15.8	7.0	9.5	10.5
Other psychiatric services	5	16	11	32	3.6	8.6	11.6	7.6
Housing services	4	3	6	13	2.9	1.6	6.3	3.1
Charities	5	3	8	16	3.6	1.6	8.4	3.8
Other child or family support services	4	13	5	22	2.9	7.0	5.3	5.3
<i>Total</i>	<i>139</i>	<i>186</i>	<i>95</i>	<i>420</i>				

Note: Multiple responses so total percentages add to more than 100.

One of the aims of PIEC focuses on increasing parents' social capacity and community connectedness. Parents were asked a number of questions about their attitudes towards their local neighbourhood and links to the community to gain some measure of their community connectedness. It can be seen from Table 4.3 that there are significant differences between the areas on most variables. Table 4.3 shows that in all areas the majority of parents agreed with the statement that their neighbourhoods were safe and clean. Most parents, particularly in East Sydney (97%), indicated that there were good parks, playgrounds and play spaces in their neighbourhood in contrast to only 50 per cent in South West Sydney. The majority of parents in all areas indicated they had access to close, regular and affordable public transport, although for just over 20 per cent on the Central Coast this was not the case. Parents in all the areas indicated they had access to basic shopping facilities.

However, when asked about access to basic services such as banks and medical clinics there were marked differences between the areas. In East Sydney only 8 per cent felt that there was limited access to basic services in contrast to over a quarter of parents on the Central Coast and just under a fifth in South West Sydney. Parents were also asked if they agreed with statements about whether it was safe for children to play outside during the day and whether people were willing to help their neighbours. Although the majority of parents agreed with these statements in all areas it is evident that more parents in South West Sydney felt that it was not safe for children to play outside during the day or that people were willing to help their neighbours than parents on the Central Coast or East Sydney.

Table 4.3: Parents' perceptions of the local neighbourhood

	Number				Per cent			
	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas
<i>Safe neighbourhood</i>								
Strongly Agree/Agree	111	158	68	337	79.9	85.4	72.3	80.6
Disagree Strongly/Disagree	24	26	24	74	17.3	14.1	25.5	17.7
DK/NA	4	1	2	7	2.9	0.5	2.1	1.7
<i>Clean neighbourhood</i>								
Strongly Agree/Agree	121	156	60	337	87.1	84.3	64.5	80.8
Disagree Strongly/Disagree	17	28	31	76	12.2	15.1	33.3	18.2
DK/NA	1	1	2	4	0.7	0.5	2.2	1.0
<i>Good parks, playgrounds and play spaces in this neighbourhood</i>								
Strongly Agree/Agree	97	178	47	322	69.8	96.7	50.5	77.4*
Disagree Strongly/Disagree	38	6	44	88	27.3	3.3	47.3	21.2*
DK/NA	4	0	2	6	2.9	0.0	2.2	1.4*
<i>Access to close, affordable, regular public transport in this neighbourhood</i>								
Strongly Agree/Agree	100	174	84	358	72.5	94.6	89.4	86.1*
Disagree Strongly/Disagree	29	7	6	42	21.0	3.8	6.4	10.1*
DK/NA	9	3	4	16	6.5	1.6	4.3	3.9*
<i>Access to basic shopping facilities in this neighbourhood</i>								
Strongly Agree/Agree	125	176	89	390	89.9	96.2	94.7	93.8*
Disagree Strongly/Disagree	14	7	5	26	10.1	3.8	5.3	6.3*
DK/NA	0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0*
<i>Access to basic services such as banks, medical clinics etc. in this neighbourhood</i>								
Strongly Agree/Agree	101	169	76	346	73.2	91.9	80.9	83.2*
Disagree Strongly/Disagree	37	14	18	69	26.8	7.6	19.2	16.6*
DK/NA	0	1	0	1	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.5*

Note: * (χ^2 $p \leq 0.05$)

Table 4.3: Parents' perceptions of the local neighbourhood (cont.)

	Number				Per cent			
	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas
<i>Safe for children to play outside during the day</i>								
Strongly Agree/ Agree	108	119	58	285	78.8	65.4	61.7	69.0*
Disagree Strongly/ Disagree	26	58	32	116	19.0	31.9	34.0	28.1*
DK/NA	3	5	4	12	2.2	2.8	4.3	2.9*
<i>People around here willing to help their neighbours</i>								
Strongly Agree/ Agree	110	150	61	321	79.1	81.5	65.6	77.2*
Disagree Strongly/ Disagree	22	29	21	72	15.8	15.8	22.6	17.3*
DK/NA	7	5	11	23	5.0	2.7	11.8	5.5*
<i>If I need information about services in the community I know where to find it</i>								
Strongly Agree/ Agree	100	139	66	305	72.5	75.6	71.0	73.5
Disagree Strongly/ Disagree	28	36	18	82	20.3	19.6	19.4	19.8
DK/NA	10	9	9	28	7.3	4.9	9.7	6.6

Note: * (X^2 $p \leq 0.05$)

Access to informal support can be a crucial factor in reducing isolation for families. Table 4.4 shows that difficulties in getting support 'often' or 'very often' were highest in South West Sydney and lowest in the Central Coast. Around 10 per cent of respondents in all areas reported difficulties 'sometimes' or 'never'.

Participation in community service activities can indicate connectedness to the local community. It is interesting to note that the majority of parents are not involved in these activities, perhaps reflecting the amount of time required to care for young children and to participate in paid work.

The final question in this table relates to community cohesion. The highest 'yes' response is from South West Sydney, where around 37 per cent said that they would move if they could. In addition significantly more parents in South West Sydney indicated that the local neighbourhood was not a safe place to bring up children. Approximately 16 per cent of parents on the Central Coast and 18 per cent of parents in East Sydney would like to move away from their current neighbourhood.

Table 4.4: Community links

	Number				Per cent			
	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas
<i>How often do you feel that you need support or help but can't get it from anyone</i>								
Very Often/often	11	18	12	41	7.9	9.7	12.9	9.8
Sometimes	63	91	41	195	45.3	49.2	44.1	46.8
Never	65	76	40	181	46.8	41.1	43.0	43.4
<i>How do you feel about your neighbourhood as a place to bring up children?</i>								
Very Good/good	100	150	54	304	71.9	81.1	58.1	72.9*
Fair/poor	39	35	39	113	28.1	18.9	41.9	27.1*
<i>Do you participate in any ongoing community service activity</i>								
Yes	36	45	20	101	26.3	24.5	21.3	24.3
No	101	139	74	314	73.7	75.5	78.7	75.7
<i>Would you currently like to move away from your neighbourhood?</i>								
Yes	22	33	35	90	15.9	17.8	37.2	21.6*
No	116	152	59	327	84.1	82.2	62.8	78.4*

Note: * ($\chi^2 p \leq 0.05$)

4.3 Family relationships and functioning

PIEC also aims to improve the parent-child relationship by providing parents with information and support so that they gain greater confidence in their parenting skills. In order to measure this parents were asked a series of questions about their parenting. Overwhelmingly the majority of parents in the sample (over 90 %) indicated they had an affectionate relationship with their child, felt close to their child and enjoyed listening and doing things with them. However, Table 4.5 shows that in some aspects of parenting, most noticeably explaining to their child why he/she was being corrected (17 %) and talking it over with their child when he/she misbehaved (15%) occurred only sometimes, rarely or never. There were no significant differences between the areas with the exception of overall parenting. Around a fifth of parents thought they were an average parent or a person who has some trouble at being a parent. Significantly fewer parents in South West Sydney compared Central Coast and East Sydney thought they were an average parent or a person who had some trouble being a parent. Information from these questions will be compared to data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children when that data is available. This will allow comparison to a cross-section of the broader population.

Table 4.5: Parenting Self-Efficacy

	Total Number				Per cent			
	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas	Central Coast	East Sydney	South West Sydney	All Areas
<i>Thinking about your child over the last six months, how often.....</i>								
<i>... did you talk it over and reason with your child when he/she misbehaved?</i>								
Always or almost always	64	82	54	200	46.4	44.6	57.5	48.1
Often	55	77	32	164	39.9	41.9	34.0	39.4
Sometimes/rarely/never or almost never	19	25	8	52	13.8	13.5	8.5	12.5
<i>....tell your child how happy he/she makes you?</i>								
Always or almost always	74	93	63	230	53.2	50.0	66.3	54.8
Often	52	72	23	147	37.4	38.7	24.2	35.0
Sometimes/rarely/never or almost never	13	21	9	43	9.4	11.3	9.5	10.2
<i>....give your child reasons why rules should be obeyed?</i>								
Always or almost always	54	78	44	176	39.1	41.9	46.8	42.1
Often	58	82	32	172	42.0	44.1	34.0	41.2
Sometimes/rarely/never or almost never	26	26	18	70	18.5	14.0	19.1	16.8
<i>...explain to your child why he/she is being corrected?</i>								
Always or almost always	51	83	45	179	36.7	44.9	47.4	42.7
Often	64	81	33	178	46.0	43.8	34.7	42.5
Sometimes/rarely/never or almost never	24	21	17	62	17.3	11.4	17.9	14.8
<i>....have warm, close times together with your child?</i>								
Always or almost always	93	113	58	264	66.9	60.8	61.1	62.9
Often	40	64	32	136	28.8	34.4	33.7	32.4
Sometimes/rarely/never or almost never	6	9	5	20	4.3	4.8	5.3	4.8
<i>...enjoy listening to your child and doing things with him/her?</i>								
Always or almost always	80	116	63	259	57.6	62.4	66.3	61.7
Often	51	62	28	141	36.7	33.3	29.5	33.6
Sometimes/rarely/never or almost never	8	8	4	20	5.8	4.3	4.2	4.8
<i>...feel close to your child, both when he/she was feeling happy and when he/she was upset?</i>								
Always or almost always	98	134	65	297	70.5	72.0	68.4	70.7
Often	35	48	24	107	25.2	25.8	25.3	25.5
Sometimes/rarely/never or almost never	6	4	6	16	4.3	2.2	6.3	3.8
<i>Overall as a parent, do you feel you are...</i>								
A very good parent	55	66	52	173	39.6	35.7	54.7	41.3*
A better than average parent	52	77	26	155	37.4	41.6	27.4	37.0*
An average parent/ A person who has some trouble at being a parent	32	42	17	91	23.0	22.7	17.9	21.7*
Not very good at being a parent	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00*

Note: * (χ^2 p \leq 0.05)

5 Summary

Information collected for the impact evaluation relates to the primary domains in which PIEC is expected to cause changes: attachment relationships between children and caregivers; social-emotional development; and family functioning and community connectedness. The analysis in this report is broken down by area to take account of differences between these localities. It is evident that significant differences exist between the areas, most noticeably in terms of the demographic characteristics of the parents. Reflecting the characteristics of the broader population in the area South West Sydney had the highest proportion of parents born overseas, who spoke a language other than English at home and relied on government pension or benefit as their main source of income compared to the other areas. These differences will have to be taken into account when analysing changes over time.

Attachment Relationships

The baseline data shows that the majority of staff have positive and effective relationships with the children. However, around a fifth of staff indicated they have negative and ineffective relationships with the children. In contrast parents completing the Child-Parent Relationship Scale (CPRS) (Pianta, 2001) indicated over a third have high conflict and over 50 per cent have high dependency levels in their relationships with their children. Approximately one fifth of the Total CPRS scores reported by parents indicate lower overall positivity in their relationships with their children.

Social-emotional development

For the majority of children the scores for both measures of social and emotional development did not indicate problem behaviours. However, for children aged between 1-3 approximately 17 per cent were of the sample were rated by parents as having high problem scores and low competence scores indicating *Of Concern* status. For children aged 3 years and over around one-fifth of the sample were rated by staff as having difficulty scores in the abnormal range. These scores vary across the areas. In contrast only ten per cent of parents rated their children in the abnormal range for the total difficulties score.

Community connectedness

At baseline the majority of parents indicated that their neighbourhoods were safe and clean, they had access to good parks, basic shopping facilities and services and it was a good place to bring up children. However, there were significant differences between the areas with more parents in South West Sydney indicating that they would like to move out of the area, it was not safe for children to play outside and people were unwilling to help their neighbours than parents in East Sydney or the Central Coast.

Data will be collected again in November 2006 and November 2007 so that changes in the various domains can be analysed over time to assess the effectiveness of PIEC in terms of improvement in relationships between children, parents, child care centre staff and communities; increases in social competence and emotional regulation in children; better quality care for children enrolled at the PIEC child care centres and increases in community connectedness and the factors associated with these changes.

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