

BROTHERHOOD OF ST. LAURENCE

FAMILY DAY CARE DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

FAMILY DAY CARE

Family Day Care is the regular provision, under supervision of daytime care for children other than their own by housewives in their own homes. It is distinguished from informal child-minding arrangements by the sponsorship, supervision and ultimate responsibility of a controlling organisation.

A Family Day Care programme is directed towards enhancing developmental opportunities for the children, encouraging parent involvement, and seeking ways to develop the skills of the women providing the service while offering them a satisfying means of supplementing their income within the home.

AIMS:

1. The provision of day care for pre-school children, and before and after school care for school-age children, of a predictable and satisfactory quality.
2. The provision of pre-school developmental activities for children who may otherwise be denied them - both by the introduction of experimental domiciliary projects and by assisting the children into local kindergarten programmes as appropriate. It is recognised that a proportion of the children are likely to have some environmental disabilities in high rise flat living, while others, in addition, have to cope with cultural, language and social difficulties.
3. The promotion of parent education and participation in a programme designed for their children and chosen by them for their children.
4. The provision of additional income and satisfying involvement for those housewives who enter the programme as Family Day Care staff. Two subsidiary aims are the enhancing of their own effectiveness as parents through the training facilities offered and the rationalisation of the present situation whereby the same mothers, if otherwise seeking to supplement their income outside the home, would add to the districts' child care problems.
5. The elevation of the status of child care as an occupation by the development of training programmes for Family Day Care staff. In particular to demonstrate to parents who use this service that a degree of skill and knowledge is required of those who undertake the protracted care of other people's children. By this means also to develop greater discrimination among parents in relation to acceptable levels of care for their children,

THE SETTING

The head office of the Brotherhood of St. Laurence is located in south Fitzroy an inner suburban industrial district bordering on the City of Melbourne.

This district has been characterised up to the present by a high proportion of low income families and, in recent decades, by a substantial migrant population. Although these factors in themselves produce some stresses, these have been compounded by public housing policy in the last few years. During 1960's there was block clearance of houses on land directly opposite the agency's headquarters. Approximately 550 people had been housed on this land. As replacement, four twenty-storey blocks of flats are planned with an estimated population of at least 3,000 half of whom will be children. By definition, successful applicants for Housing Commission flats are in a relatively low income bracket.

The combined influence of the new housing developments, Commonwealth immigration policy and the trend towards increasing maternal participation in the workforce has contributed to the present state of urgency concerning day care in Fitzroy. By late 1970 when the first two of the four flat blocks had been occupied, 60% of the resident families were of non-British migrant origin. By May, 1971, the waiting list for the local day nursery contained the names of over 100 children of whom all but one came from non-British migrant families. The exception was a child of a British migrant family. For some time before this the evidence has been forthcoming to suggest that migrant women are more likely to work than their Australian born counterparts. ("Changing Horizons," Department of Labour and National Service, 1968.) In particular non-British migrant working mothers appear to be the most likely to have young children when compared to either Australian born or British migrant working mothers. (Papers of H.R.H. Duke of Edinburgh's Third Commonwealth Study Conference 1968, "Working Women in Australia".)

Apart from the Fitzroy Day Nursery, there is a private child-minding centre staffed by Yugoslav nuns and a full day kindergarten staffed by Italian nuns. Although these centres are in North Fitzroy, they are already subjected to a demand greater than they can meet. The local Catholic parish school is trying to assist by offering places to a number of kindergarten age children for at least the rest of this current year. The Fitzroy Council of Social Services is investigating ways of providing more day nursery accommodation.

Even prior to the development of the new Housing Commission estate the need for day care in Fitzroy exceeded the supply of vacancies. However, concern about the absence of day care facilities has magnified greatly since the occupation of the completed high-rise blocks and is in no sense abated by the knowledge that at least another 200 flats have yet to be occupied upon the erection of the fourth block. Into this situation of burgeoning population there is little foreseeable increase in day care places.

The experience of the first two blocks is that a number of mothers work even when there are no suitable day care facilities for their children. Informal, uncontrolled and sometimes illegal child care arrangements are reported but are difficult to establish because of the underground nature of these activities which may breach both Housing Commission and Health Department regulations. The intact migrant families who appear to place considerable value on establishing financial security emerge as a particularly exposed group. Even if the vacancies existed they would have a low priority for service in the existing day nursery as they less clearly meet the provisions concerning socio-economic need. However their children are as much at risk as the children of the deserted father or the unmarried mother.

It is against this background that the Family Day Care Demonstration Project is being proposed.

There have been various attempts to regulate full-day family care for pre-school children. In Western Australia and Tasmania registration is required if any children at all are being minded, in New South Wales if more than one, and in Northern Territory if more than two are in day care. In Victoria up to four children can be minded commercially before registration is required.

Independently of the move to impose controls there has been an attempt by one Victorian municipal agency to utilise known and reliable local housewives by sending on to them parents who need day care for their children. This operates as an informal exchange and thus existing local patterns and networks are being sustained. This innovation has many advantages including its flexibility and informality and should be kept in mind as a possible variation on a formal Family Day Care programme if this should prove too confining to influence existing local patterns. An exchange depends on detailed knowledge of local personalities so that minders can be confidently recommended. In relation to the new housing estate in Fitzroy, this knowledge is not yet available although this demonstration project should go some way towards developing it. The effects of an agency's intrusion into the private minding habits of the community are not known and the experimental nature of the actual programme itself as well as its specific techniques needs emphasising.

THE CONNECTION WITH INFORMAL CHILD-MINDING

The main purpose behind this proposed service is to meet an existing need. It is a possible alternative to quality group care which, because of its costs and the financial limits on expansion, is no longer meeting this need. It may also be an alternative to unsupervised and uncontrolled private informal minding which local agencies believe is frequently being provided under conditions detrimental to the children's interests.

While suggesting a Family Day Care Programme is an alternative to private family minding, it is also acknowledged that the two are closely related, the distinction being that controls are built into the formal agency service. Inasmuch as care in private homes is believed to be the most common form of day care in use, and for some parents is preferred to group care anyway, then this type of programme serves to make a necessary connection between traditional forms and contemporary standards.

GROUP CARE AND THE B.S.I. PROJECT

Despite the absence of relevant known precedents for this type of programme, apart from those built into State licencing as in Western Australia, Family Day Care is often advocated. It has been employed in the United States, although accounting for only a small proportion of supervised day care services in that country. The underlying assumption tends to be that it is primarily justified because it provides an alternative to group care for children under three years of age for whom group care is maintained to be damaging.

At any age in childhood poor quality group care is potentially disadvantageous, and probably particularly so to the highly vulnerable infant category. However while there is little knowledge about the effects of good quality group care,

there is some support from the sparse research field that it does not necessarily produce the postulated deviations in emotional, social and intellectual development.

The intention in elaborating upon this situation is to emphasise that, in promoting Family Day Care, this agency is not lending weight to either point of view in a current controversy about child development. It nevertheless acknowledges the obligation to remain informed of contemporary thinking and research findings, and to be willing to modify its programme accordingly.

Secondly, Family Day Care is not being proposed because of any adverse view about good quality group care for any age category, but substantially because of the shortage of such good quality group care. It is based on the assumption that there are other, as yet untapped, resources in the community which could be utilised to meet the need for day care of an adequate standard. These resources are in the form of local housewives and mothers.

A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Because of its lack of precedent this programme is being proposed as a demonstration project of three years' duration. It will also be largely experimental inasmuch as policies, practices and guidelines will need to be constantly under review.

At the end of this time it is anticipated that there will be, in consequence, sufficient understanding of Family Day Care in this type of Australian setting to prove useful to those voluntary and statutory agencies concerned with meeting the demand for day care.

Although this is an isolated programme, it is primarily intended to show its relevance as an extension of the service offered by group day care centres. It is only financially attractive as part of such a service which can provide it with needed professional staff and facilities without costly new positions having to be created. The only limits to its expansion under these circumstances are the availability of suitable housewives and the extent of supervisory time. In reverse, Family Day Care can be curtailed as demand slackens without sacrificing salaried staff or prior outlay on buildings. This is particularly relevant when the service is geared towards an artificially created population such as arises in a new public housing estate. Demographic patterns cannot be predicted and the possibility must be borne in mind that the demand could have altered significantly by the time the present pre-schoolers reach teenage.

In terms of adequacy of service the most desirable place for a Family Day Care programme is as part of a service which includes group care. Then an alternative is available for each child depending on his needs and his parents' wishes. Better training facilities are available for the participating housewives and the use of staff and equipment is maximised. Most importantly experience and knowledge of the various forms of day care can be concentrated in a way that would lead more readily to the growth of new insights into this field.

Those agencies currently providing group care in subsidised day nurseries are at a point of such acute financial difficulty in this State that there is little hope of persuading them to experiment with new programmes until these have been tested. For this reason the Brotherhood of St. Laurence proposes to accept responsibility as the testing agency.

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence is represented on the Fitzroy Social Services Council. This body is operating in a consultative capacity in relation to the municipal council in a joint endeavour to establish more day care facilities in this district.

The Fitzroy Social Services Council upholds the principle that family day care and before and after school care are important elements in a comprehensive day care service. Their intention is to make provision for these extension programmes in any new centre which results from their current endeavours.

Ultimate absorption of this project into such a community-based service is envisaged, both by the Brotherhood of St. Laurence and by the Fitzroy Social Services Council.

STRUCTURE

Ultimate Responsibility

Ultimate responsibility for the programme would rest with the Brotherhood of St. Laurence.

Salaried Staff

Programme Supervisor - To be responsible for the administration of the project, the selection of Family Day Care staff, supervision of the placements, interviewing parents applying for service, and promoting the involvement of local health and welfare services.

To develop techniques specific to the demonstration nature of this project including Family Day Care staff training programmes, parent participation and service evaluation.

In order to weld both the administrative and experimental functions the position requires a social worker experienced in child placement and foster care supervision.

Kindergarten Teacher - To develop domiciliary programmes for children of all ages, thereby accentuating the position that education of children commences in earliest infancy and is the concern of those responsible for the full day care of even the youngest children; to facilitate the entry of older pre-school children into formal kindergarten programmes where appropriate; to communicate principles of early childhood education to Family Day Care staff and parents.

Office Assistant - to provide the typing service, assist with the keeping of records and undertake the bookkeeping.

Specialist Consultant

Paediatric Consultant -to assist the Programme Supervisor in her oversight of the children's health and to help in the promotion of parent involvement by providing periodic medical checks at a time when the parents can be present. Employment on a voluntary basis, designed to allow a group session with parents at least once a year and examination of the children at least twice a year.

Family Day Care Staff

The term "staff" is employed here to describe the housewives recruited into the programme. It is used deliberately to avoid the use of the term Family Day Care 'I'mothers' which is current. In the eyes of both the children's parents and the agency they are not expected to be the children's "mothers" but to provide competent and emotionally satisfying care in the temporary absence of the children's mothers. In the sense that the retention of their services depends on their competence they are in staff-employer relationship to the agency.

However, a contractual basis for the relationship of the Family Day Care staff to the agency will be worked out. This will include questions of insurance coverage for the children in their care on the agency's behalf, compulsory requirements of the agency for their participation in training programmes and group activities, guaranteed payment by the agency for services rendered and an undertaking to conform to the agency's requirements in relation to certain aspects of child care.

The Family Day Care staff will be recruited and assessed by the Programme Supervisor. Their capacity to benefit from the programme should be considered alongside their potential to contribute.

Relief staff will have to be recruited as a resource in the case of an emergency such as illness on the part of the regular Family Day Care staff.

Consultative Committee - to meet periodically with the salaried staff to discuss policies and procedures and to provide a sounding board for the testing of ideas and the development of guidelines.

It is recommended that a small group of specifically nominated people with appropriate experience be invited to participate on this committee.

Parents and Staff Committee - to provide a forum for periodic interchange amongst the salaried staff, the Family Day Care staff and the children's parents so that there is outlet for ideas and an avenue whereby participants can influence policy. The deeper involvement of parents in policy making is a goal of the service, and seeking methods of implementing this should be part of its experimental function.

FINANCE

Rates of Payment.

The programme is committed to sustaining placements wherever feasible to minimise the inconsistency of care that children experience through breakdowns in arrangements and subsequent replacing. For this reason it will accept responsibility for guaranteeing regular payments to Family Day Care staff, even where the parents' contributions cannot be consistently sustained or need subsidisation to bring up to the level being paid out on their behalf.

A flat rate payment of \$8. per week per child for full day care conforms to the current local going rate for informal family minding. The rate proposed for before and after school care is \$3.50 per child per week.

It is estimated that one third of the parents will need subsidy to the extent of fifty percent of the proposed rate. Costing for the before and after school service, which will be directed mainly towards the older siblings of the children in full day care, will be on the same basis of one third needing subsidy to the extent of 50%.

Payments which will be a direct cost against parents will include the cost of meals additional to one main meal per day, and a holding fee of \$2. per child per week for the period of the parents' annual leave.

Number of Children Served

The main factors limiting the extent of the service are the availability of suitable Family Day Care staff and the financial restrictions on the overall extent to which parents can be directly subsidised. The estimated numbers are conservative for this reason. Expansion beyond these limits remains a possibility, particularly if the call on direct subsidy of parents proves lighter than is anticipated at this stage.

In the first year it is proposed to aim at a total of 30 children in full day care, of whom 10 will be subsidised. In the second and third year the aim will be to serve 50 children, of whom 17 will be subsidised. Fifty children is the average capacity of a day nursery. Before and after school care costs are estimated on the basis of 15 children using the service, of whom 5 will be subsidised.

COMMENT ON COSTS:

1. Insurances are undertaken through the Brotherhood of St. Laurence.
2. Insurance by the F.D.C. staff of their legal liability (premium approximately \$5.00 per year per policy) will be compulsory but at their expense.
3. No responsibility is undertaken for expenses incurred through sickness or injury of children minded other than "legal liability.
4. F.D.C. staff are employees under the terms of the Workers' Compensation Act.

5. The Programme Supervisor's salary is accounted for here at the level of an Infant Welfare Sister's salary (including an anticipated 10% increase). This is the professional qualification required by the Victorian Department of Health for a matron of a day nursery catering for the full age range of pre-school children such as this programme will serve. The additional cost of employing a social worker will be borne by the Brotherhood of St. Laurence so that the experimental functions of the Programme Supervisor are not a direct burden on the Family Day Care Project.
6. While the Family Day Care Demonstration Project has a deficit in relation to running costs of the same order as group care, these include artificial costs arising out of the isolated nature of the project and are inherent in its demonstration role. If, as the result of this experience, existing day nurseries choose to incorporate family day care programmes into their service, then salaries, administration and premises would already be substantially accounted for and a large part of the overheads of this project would be eliminated. (see Tables III & IV)
7. Even given the artificial costs depicted here, the project can be seen in perspective if compared to the sample of day nursery costs without allowing for the State Government subsidy on which these nurseries draw in Victoria. (see Table IV)
8. The first year's costs reflect the need to budget for a conservative rate of development, in terms of the number of children served, as the service builds up momentum.
9. The difference in capital costs between building and equipping a new nursery and the amount needed to start this project is of the order of \$70,000 compared to \$300.

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TABLE I

Capital Expenditure

3 Secondhand desks, 6 secondhand chairs, teamaking facilities	\$50.00
Card Cabinet, Filing cabinet	40.00
Typewriter	50.00
Radiators and sundries	30.00
Toys and equipment pool	<u>100.00</u>
<u>Pay \$300</u>	\$270.00

	Year I	Year II		Year III		
			\$	\$	\$	
Rental - allow \$20 p.w.	1040		1040		1040	
Electricity inc. heating	50		50		50	
Cleaning materials	20		20		20	
Insurance of contents - Fire, based on \$500 value						
Burglary " " \$100 value	10	1120	10	1120	10	1120

B. Staffing

Social Worker Grade I	5140		5140		5140	
Kindergartner - 7th year rate to commence	4360		4520		4680	
Typiste/clerk - half time	1400		1430		1450	
Payments to child-minders						
Year I - 30 children @ \$8 x 49 weeks	11760		19600		19600	
Years II & III - 50 children @ \$8 x 49 weeks						
Before and after school' Years I, II, III - care 15 children @ \$3.50 x 49 weeks	2573		2573		2573	
Staff Amenities	20		20		20	
Superannuation, Insurances, workers' comp.	110	25363	150	33433	160	33623

C. Administrative & Office

Stationery	100		50		50
Telephone - 1st year includes connection	100		80		80
Postage	10		10		10
Library - initial plus up-dating	50		20		20
Depreciation of office furniture & equipment	20		20		20
Typewriter maintenance	20		20		20
Travelling - 2000 miles @ 10 cents	200		200		200
Insurances :					
Fidelity guarantee (\$200)	20		20		20
Cash on premises)	30		30		30
Cash in transit)					
Legal liability - office premises			10		10
child minders		560		460	460
Total Expenditure	27043		35013		35203
Total Deficit	15099		16601		16791
Add to first yearfs costs capital outlay	300				
	\$15399				

TABLE II

RUNNING COSTS

Estimated Income and Expenditure:

Item	<u>Year I</u> \$	<u>Year II</u> \$	<u>Year III</u> \$
<u>INCOME</u>			
Contributions by parents -			
<u>Year I</u> - 20 children @ \$8 x 49 weeks	7840		
10 children @ \$4 x 49 weeks	<u>1960</u> 9800		
<u>Years II & III</u>			
33 children @ \$8 x 49 weeks		12936	12936
17 children @ \$4 x 49 weeks		3332 16268	<u>3332</u> 16286
Before and after school care - Years I~ II, III.			
10 children @ \$3.50 x 49 weeks	1715	1715	1715
5 children @ \$1.75 x 49 weeks	<u>429</u> 2144	<u>429</u> <u>2144</u>	<u>429</u> 2144
	\$11944	\$18412	<u>\$18412</u>

TABLE III

BSL Family Day Care Demonstration Project - Unit Cost per Child

	Year I 30 children per x'year		Year II 50 children per year		Year III 50 children per year		week	week
Outlay per child	\$27043	\$18.40	\$35013	\$14.29	\$35203	\$14.36		
Income per child	11944	8.02	18412	7.51	18412	7.51		
Deficit per child	*15099	10.38	\$16601	6.78	\$16791	6.85		

* A year is calculated as 49 weeks

TABLE IV

Comparison with Subsidised Day Nursery Costs

These figures are rough estimates only and were made available without exact documentation. The subsidy rate used for this calculation is that available through the Maternal, Infant and Pre-School Branch of the Victorian Department of Health prior to April 1971.

	<u>Cost Including Government Subsidy</u>				<u>Excluding Govt. Subsidy</u>			
<u>Case I</u> - Community Welfare Foundation, 38 children, 1970								
Unit outlay per child per week				\$13.00				\$13.00
" income " " " "								
subsidy approx.			\$5.00					
parents approx.			<u>3.62</u>	<u>8.62</u>				3.62
Unit deficit per child per week				\$4.38				\$9.38
<u>Case II</u> - South Melbourne City Council, 40 children, 1970								
Unit outlay per child per week				\$14.60				\$14.60
" income " " " "								
subsidy approx.			\$5.00					
parents approx.			3.40	8.40				3.40
Unit deficit per child per week				\$6.20				\$11.20
<u>Case III</u> Average estimates for V.A.D.N. 1971 - based on report in A.P.A. Newsletter, April 1971. 53 children								
Unit outlay per child per week				\$12.00				\$12.00
" income " " " "								
subsidy approx.			\$5.00					
parents approx.			2.50	7.50				2.50
Unit deficit per child per week				\$4.50				\$9.50

THE BROTHERHOOD OF ST. LAURENCE

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence is a multi-purpose family welfare agency. It has been particularly involved with families exposed to stress because of socio-economic difficulties in relation to factors such as housing, employment and the maintenance of adequate incomes.

A professional social work service is provided with an emphasis on dealing with the problems of economically disadvantaged families.

Related to this concern for families operating under difficulties the agency is currently conducting two demonstration projects. One is a family planning clinic. The other is an after-school Creative Leisure Centre which aims at providing local children with opportunities for informal but constructive recreation and self-development through play.

The desire to understand causes while dealing with resultant problems led the Brotherhood to establish a research department. The work of the Department includes the publications "High Rents and Low Incomes" (1964), "The Cost of Free Education" (1968) and "High Living" (1967).

Activity in the field of public housing policy is long-standing. From 1954-1960 the Brotherhood and the Housing Commission of Victoria co-operated in a programme known as the Family Service Project where State government finance and Brotherhood staff were contributed to provide intensive social work supervision of a group of poor risk Housing Commission tenants.

The establishment of the Brotherhood's two housing settlements for retired people also arose out of this involvement with housing conditions and their social effects. These undertakings reflect the interest in seeking new approaches to welfare when existing methods need bolstering.

The agency's experience in these fields of housing policy and family needs is directly relevant to the present proposal, compounded as the local situation is by the two additional elements of Commonwealth immigration policy and the rapidly increasing incidence of maternal employment.

12th May, 1971.

- Brotherhood of St. Laurence
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