



Cracking the Hard Nut
Creative Approaches to Teen
& Adult literacy
Steps to the Future - Learning Pathways for
Young Mothers Project
A Case Study in Partnerships for Innovation in
Adult Learning & Literacy

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The Social Inclusion Strategy for Tasmania states that:

"A socially inclusive society is based on lifelong learning that enables people to develop their skills to participate in employment and education, as well as in social networks and community life ... Socially inclusive communities value continuous improvement". (2009:27)

"Low Literacy is associated with several adverse health outcomes including low health knowledge, increased incidence of chronic illness and less than optimal use of preventative health services" (Berkman et al, 2004)

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Steps to the Future

Learning Pathways for Young Mothers in Glenorchy

- ✚ This presentation will review the development and progress of an innovative partnership project in the Glenorchy LGA.
- ✚ The project delivers a range of individual and group learning opportunities at a local community level.
- ✚ Programs are tailored to meet the needs of young mothers aged 17-25 yrs.
- ✚ Key partners in the project are the Glenorchy Learning, Information, Networking Centre (LINC) former State Library of Tasmania, Mission Australia, Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (CRS) & Vinnie's.

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So this is success!



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Steps to the Future

Learning Pathways for Young Mothers in Glenorchy

- ✚ The STF project is led by Renate Hughes, the Social Planning Officer & Jill Sleiters, the Community Development Officer for Glenorchy City Council.
- ✚ Renate and Jill have a shared background in teaching, community development, youth work, children's services and early learning.
- ✚ Renate has worked on youth projects including young people and binge drinking & Jill has developed the *Children and Families Strategy* for Glenorchy and hosts networks such as Glenorchy Action Interagency Network (GAIN) and hosts events such as Dad's Day Out.

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"I feel like I am getting somewhere and not just waiting for it to happen" (STF participant feedback)

- ✚ In early 2010 Glenorchy City Council received funding from the Tasmanian Community Fund to develop and implement a *Building Learning Communities – Family Literacy project* for young mums aged 17-25 who live in the Glenorchy LGA & their children.
- ✚ The STF project has 8 key objectives (**Handout**)
- ✚ The project has now been operating in Glenorchy for over two years.

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Laying a Foundation for the Steps to the Future Project

- ✚ **Research undertaken in the development of the Steps to the Future (STF) model suggests offering wide ranging and adaptable learning support, initiatives and programs for disengaged learners.** (Brotherhood of St Laurence, CIRCLE Centre for innovation, Research, Creativity and Leadership in Education, NSW)
- ✚ **These are characterised by learner autonomy, small groups, less regimentation, adult learning principles and collaboration between educators and the community to ensure supported learning.** (Myconos & Duizend, 2010, UK Youth 2010)

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Reading together at the LINC



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“They help you set achievable goals..it is not like a 5 year University degree”

- ✚ The STF project provides positive, supported and flexible pathways to personal learning and development of life skills, informal & formal training, work & volunteer opportunities.
- ✚ STF also has a focus on health literacy and wellbeing for young mothers and their children & provides opportunities/activities to build family literacy.

“In STF you do small courses that gradually add to your skills”

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Building my health literacy!



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What did our young mums have in common?

- ✚ Early school leaving, unemployment, low income, unstable housing, social isolation, depression & anxiety were features they shared.
- ✚ Lack of transport, limited access to child care, a need for information and community connections were immediate needs.
- ✚ In addition poor nutrition, health & wellbeing, unstable family and personal relationships, alcohol & other drug use and offending had impacted on learning and literacy achievement.

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What did our young mums have in common?

- ✚ They all wanted connection with other adults facing similar issues & challenges.
- ✚ They wanted time away from their children and in adult company.
- ✚ They wanted to develop life skills.
- ✚ They wanted their children to learn in a safe, supported and fun environment.
- ✚ They wanted to develop their self esteem, confidence and practical skills.
- ✚ Most of them were in the 20-25 age range. **(65.5%)**
“Studying with other young mothers is a more motivating way to learn”

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How is the Steps to the Future project managed?

- ✚ A feature of the STF model is local service networks supporting program delivery. This network includes over 37 services.
- ✚ There is also broader support via the Youth Action Network Glenorchy (YANG), Glenorchy Action Interagency Network (GAIN) and other key groups who work on children's, youth and family issues in Glenorchy.
- ✚ These networks were our initial 'entry point' for young mums into STF.
- ✚ Word of mouth is now the major referral pathway to STF.

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What do the STF programs look like?

- ✚ Sessions are short, varying from 2 to 5 hours each.
- ✚ Most are morning sessions with an average length of 3 hours. This 'fits' best with young mums stated needs and attention span.
- ✚ 40% of programs run for 1-4 weeks.
- ✚ 28% of programs have been 7 weeks or longer .
- ✚ 17 programs have focused on education and training options.
- ✚ 25 STF participants have also engaged in our pathway planning program.

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What are the project outcomes?

- ✚ There have been 472 adult participants and 500 + child participants. We have provided care sessions to 2,560 child participants. (many attend multiple programs, or events).
- ✚ There are currently 83 young mothers registered with STF.
- ✚ There is a core group of 12 young mothers who attend regularly with 14 children.
- ✚ 25 young mums have been involved in the Pathway Planning Program receiving ongoing learning support.

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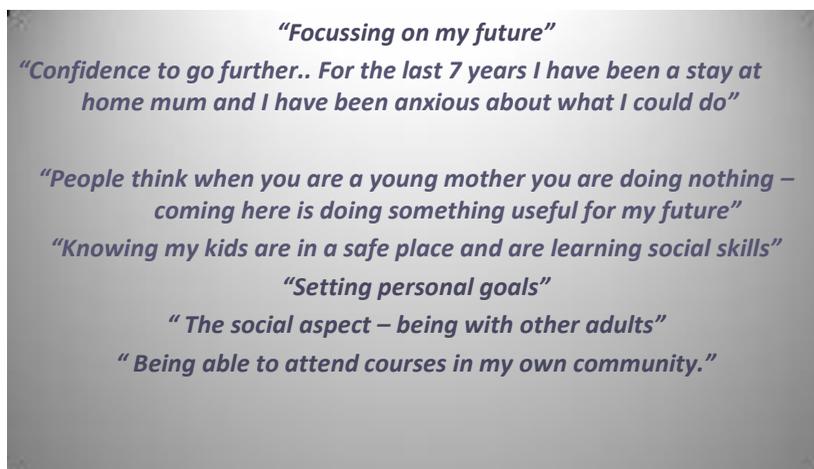
What are the project outcomes?

- ✚ To date we have conducted 60 different types of programs, events and information sessions ranging from oral health to cooking, nutrition, art, managing relationships, parenting, retail, fitness, work preparation, self care and computer skills.
- ✚ More than 37 services are involved either as partners, referral agencies or active participants in programs e.g. **CRS attend sessions to offer case management support to young mums living with a disability, injury or health condition.**
- ✚ We have created volunteer opportunities for participants.

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What participants like about the program



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What makes the STF model a success?

- ✚ Having a young parent specific group tailored to their needs, abilities and 'futures'.
- ✚ Non-judgemental attitudes of facilitators and coordinators/participants feeling valued and safe.
- ✚ A number of levels to engage e.g. Just come to a 'Fit and Fun' session or join an 8 week program.
- ✚ Flexible entry and exit from the programs.
- ✚ Actively asking participants to identify their interests and learning needs.

"No-one judges you here"

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What makes the STF model a success?

- ✚ The individual meetings with participants on entry to identify needs, goals, potential barriers and to build a rapport with project staff.
- ✚ Intensive Pathway Planning to set goals and progress on educational pathways.
- ✚ Provision of transport, adjunct child care, food and social activities, at easily accessible venues.
- ✚ Building mother and child activities into the program.
e.g. Reading Together, Cooking, Creative activities.

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What makes the STF model a success?

- ✚ The strong partnership with other services and networks such as GAIN is central to our success.
- ✚ These partnerships allow for '*piggy backing*' with other programs e.g. First Aid , Westpac '*Financial Sense*' program as part of *Parents Staying Connected* (Mission).
- ✚ Our Partnerships reduce replication of programs and services.
- ✚ Partnerships allow for more *assisted* referral to other support services. e.g. GIDS, Anglicare FMHS, Child & Family Centre, Parenting programs, SASS, Family Planning, Relationships Australia

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What makes the STF model a success?

- ✚ Offering practical skills components within programs e.g. Vinnie's – work experience.
- ✚ Ongoing evaluation of the program and project overall with participants i.e. Focus groups, surveys etc.
- ✚ Being prepared to trial new programs e.g. '*Butt out for Bubs*', SIDS Prevention, Oral Health program.
- ✚ Time with staff outside the group (2 worker model) including assisted referral to support services.



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What are some of the programs that worked well?

- ✚ Events were a good way to promote the program and build a relationship with young mothers and their children. For example STF was launched on 27th May 2010 at the Glenorchy LINC and this public event was attended by 65 young mums.
- ✚ Other events that worked well were Mental Health Week (2011) and International Women's Day (2012).
- ✚ We delivered a number of 'Looking Good Feeling Great', 'Rock and Rhyme' and 'Zumba' sessions at the beginning of the STF project and at regular intervals since. (2010 - 2012).

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What are some programs that worked well?

- ✚ Offered a range of short programs in partnership with Glenorchy LINC i.e. Computer skills, Literacy support. (2010 – 2012)
- ✚ Designed & hosted the 'Kick Start Your Future' course at West Moonah Community Centre. (2010-2011)
- ✚ Developed and hosted a number of parenting and relationship programs i.e. Pulse YHC & Anglicare 'Positive Relationships', Colony 47 'Tapping Inner Strengths', 'Bringing Up Great Kids' and Relationships Australia 'Negotiating Relationships' program.



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What are some programs that worked well?

- ✚ We held a number of 'Taster' sessions at a range of venues including - Career Reference Centre, YMCA Glenorchy LINC, West Moonah Community House, Salvation Army Moonah, Claremont College, Chigwell Barn, Chigwell House and at Northgate Shopping Centre during Children's Week 2011. (2010 – 2011)
- ✚ We hosted a 'Let's Get Driving' event, family nutrition & 'Zumba' sessions at Goodwood Community Centre & West Moonah Community House. (2010-2011)
- ✚ We held two celebration events at the Botanical Gardens.

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Moving to accredited training

- ✚ We commenced an innovative '*Retail & Work skills*' training program with Vinnie's. This was repeated in 2012. **We had 14 graduates in 2011 and 10 in 2012.**
- ✚ We brokered a formal training agreement with Tasmania Polytechnic to deliver a *Certificate 2* (Accredited) in *Work and Training* to 8 STF participants, along with a further 4 from PSC (Mission). **All 12 completed the course and graduated in late 2011.**

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End Party for the Tasmanian Polytechnic Work & Training Certificate 2



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2012 and Beyond!

- ✚ **Relationships & Interpersonal Communication programs.** (Regular delivery in 4 week blocks with several services)
- ✚ **First Aid Training (Workplace Level 1).**
- ✚ **Parenting skills development via 'Play, Fun, Learn' & 'Bringing Up Great Kids' program led by Jill & STF educators.** (supported by the Early Childhood Foundation)
- ✚ **Children's learning & development activities such as 'Creative Me', fun learning program led by STF educators & LINC.**

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2012 and Beyond!

- ✚ Partner with CRS for Pathway Planning and other Job Service Providers.
- ✚ Literacy & Numeracy *built in – not bolted on!*
e.g. *Cooking programs, Cake Woman, art projects*
- ✚ Events such as *Mental Health Week 2012.*
- ✚ New oral health program (in reach/outreach).
- ✚ Family Planning Tasmania have developed a tailored program for young mothers with STF.
- ✚ Glenorchy on the Go – *‘Healthy, Active and Young Program’.*

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What keeps them coming to STF?

“Studying with other mothers is a more motivating way to learn”

“Being able to attend courses in my own community – not having to travel to Hobart”

*“I cant wait to get back into work – I think about it a lot’
‘For me its about planning for the future – for me.”*

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What keeps them coming to STF?

"It gives us time to meet each other – we have formed a bond"

"It is a supportive group"

"It keeps me sane"

"People think when you are a young mother you are doing nothing – coming here is doing something useful for my future"

"The child care is great, prepares them for school, its on site and secure".

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Challenges for STF

- ✚ STF is a labour intensive program given the central relationship between the STF staff , participants and service/network partners.
- ✚ Childcare & transport are expensive but an essential part of the program.
- ✚ Pathway Planning & support services – how best to deliver these?
- ✚ How to *build in* literacy support for individuals as well as via group settings?
- ✚ Educating other services to understand the STF Model and not just 'plug' any young mum into programs.
- ✚ How do we ensure the sustainability of Steps to the Future?

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Evaluation of the STF Project

- ✚ The project has an external evaluator. A range of evaluation tools were developed to assist STF staff to collect data and review each program/session and each stage of the project.
- ✚ The mid project report to the TCF has been completed (Nov. 2011) and the final report is due in June 2012.
- ✚ The STF Model will be shared with other LGA's, NGO's, LINC's & interested groups.
- ✚ Some LINC's have adapted & adopted our model.

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Thank you & Questions?



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