

## **Australian Implementation Conference (Sept 17<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup>, Sydney)**

Oral Presentation: 20 mins

**Title: A multi-agency research partnership to explore the effectiveness of a volunteer home visiting program to support vulnerable families**

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Currently underway across the four eastern States of Australia is the Volunteer Family Connect study. The aim of this study is to provide evidence to inform policy and funding decision making regarding the effectiveness and value of volunteer home visiting as a service model for supporting vulnerable families with young children.

A multi-agency partnership was established at the commencement of this project, including three leading non-Government providers of volunteer family support services, Good Beginnings Australia, Karitane and The Benevolent Society, and researchers from the University of NSW. This team has worked closely together in the development of a best practice volunteer home visiting program based on a review of research evidence, policy, and the collective experience of the service providers. The program has been manualised, and is being delivered across the service organisations supported by appropriate training and ongoing evaluation of program fidelity.

The research study examining program effectiveness, including outcomes for parents and children, as well as social return on investment has been developed hand-in hand with program development and implementation. Researchers have played a key role in preparing the organisations for research participation, including running workshops on 'research mindedness' with all staff and volunteers. Research methods are currently being piloted in preparation for a randomised controlled study of the program to commence later in the year.

This project serves as an excellent example of implementation science in action. It demonstrates the value of an effective service provider/research partnership in producing a high quality program which will be evaluated according to gold standard research methods.