

ACSA Activity 2020 – 2021

Last year was a big year for ACSA as we realized our long-standing goal of establishing Communities of Practice (CoP) in the services sector. This has been an exciting time, and we have been glad to welcome managers and frontline workers into discussions and knowledge sharing about how we respond to children's safety when domestic and Family Violence is present. This strategy was drawn from a Strategic Planning session, facilitated by Dana Shen, which aimed to 'build an evidence-based approach that supports organisations and their workforces to engage men who use violence in their relationships'.

To begin this process, we employed Flinders University Social Work Innovation, Research Living Space (SWIRLS) and their Social Work Department to co-design with the group of Service Managers and Practitioners to determine where we wanted our focus to be in 2021. The key priorities that emerged from this group that the function of the CoP was to Encourage, Educate and Integrate the knowledge that we had in the room into our practice on the frontline. It also became clear that the activities that we wanted to utilise were problem solving specific work challenges, drawing on and sharing the expertise in the group, discussing the knowledge bases and developments in the area that would lead to developing arguments for change.

The CoP's that we ran in the first half of the year generated much interest and we had 30 – 40 participants at the sessions from both Government and the NGO sector. It is clear from the feedback from these sessions that this is an area of need within the sector and creates a supportive environment to talk and explore the work of engaging men around their violence. There have already been invitations between organisations to observe each other's work and to share practice. This can only be good for the sector and children who are exposed to violence in their home. The more we can speak to men who use violence in their relationships and keep them accountable for the impact of this on their partners and children, the safer our community will be. This also leads to less children being placed in Out of Home Care.

I want to acknowledge the valuable time the organisations involved in ACSA have given to their staff to participate in the CoP. This is an investment in the shared understanding of the work at a sector level. It is also growing a community of competent, capable and confident practitioners and managers who can protect children through providing opportunities for men to change their behaviour. We hope this will lead to preventing the use of violence in relationships into the future.

Thank you to CAFFSA for supporting this initiative with support of staff (Andrea Konigsmann will be missed!) and Rob Martin who is a great supporter and advocate for ACSA, and who provide COVID friendly spaces for us to meet.

Megan Hughes and Michael Hawke – Co-Chairs of ACSA