



Community Connect

Supporting Otago Families

SUMMER
2017

Family Start is a free home visiting programme that provides support to expectant parents, and parents of newborn and young children. We asked two clients to tell us about each of their experiences of the programme.

Charles, a father of one son, signed up to Family Start without any idea of how much of a valuable start it would give his family. "I thought that I would have occasional visits with check-ups and meal advice. Instead they helped me adjust to so many of the daily tasks and needs that my child required."

"At the time those tasks seemed daunting and overwhelming – a standard of parenting that I would never live up to. But with encouragement and helpful tips I became more confident, until those tasks were second nature. What Family Start provided was so much more valuable to me than *just* a start. A start helps you take the first steps before leaving you to it. Family Start is a comprehensive system of support that guides you as you develop your parenting skills."

"That difference became deeply important to me as my son grew up and I realised that being a parent requires learning a new set of skills every couple of months."

"The thing about kids and families is that they aren't static. They change constantly, demanding a new set of skills and providing a new set of challenges. That's another reason why Family Start has been so valuable to me. No matter what happened to my family as my son grew up, my whānau worker was there to support me in one way or another."

"Their support helped with the small things like the thousand burning questions I had as a new parent: Is it ever ok to let your child cry? How long should time-out go for? Am I feeding my

child enough? Am I feeding my child too much? How much should I worry about fussiness over vegetables? How can I model stress management well?”.

“Their support also helped with the bigger problems. When my son fell off the weight scale, they helped with meal plans. When my relationship with my partner struggled, they found us counselling. When our relationship ended, they helped with limiting the effects on my son. When I forgot to take my family out to places they showed up with event tickets that he would enjoy. When I was hospitalised they checked that I had the support systems I needed in place. And when I became too focused on the joint tasks of raising a child, completing a PhD, and working part time jobs, they were there to remind me that I also needed to stop and take care of myself. Families and kids change constantly and Family Start is great because they provide support for the whole family that adapts to your needs.”

He goes on to say, “I’ve been lucky so far. I’ve had generous support from a few different people. They are essential supports in my life which enable me to be a good parent. But I also value the regular and informed advice, tips, and interactions that Family Start provides.”

“It’s hard to know what my life would have been like without Family Start’s support and advice. I may have dropped out of my studies because of the workload. My son may have been badly impacted by the separation of his parents. I may have done a poor job of parenting without



someone around who knew the milestones to look for. My son may have not gone to day care for some time longer and missed out on the amazing social interaction that I couldn’t provide from home. I may have ended up in court over care disputes instead of the co-parenting arrangement we have.”

“But the thing is, I have been lucky. I don’t have to worry about the many different ways that parenting or my life could have gone wrong because I had Family Start. And Family Start is valuable because ‘start’ doesn’t cover all the services and assistance which the whānau workers provide. Yes they are Family Start but they are also family support. They are family care and development. They are family comfort. They are family guides. And they are as valuable to me as the rest of my family.”

About Family Start

At any one time, we offer Family Start to more than 200 families in Otago. We have teams based in Dunedin, Balclutha, Oamaru and Alexandra. Our whānau workers also visit families in other towns and rural communities in the region.

Family Start is a nationally recognised voluntary programme that helps whānau who are struggling with challenges or problems that may make it harder for them to care for their baby or young child. The programme focuses on helping parents do a great job with their child’s health, growth, education and safety.

A Family Start whānau worker usually begins to support babies and their parents or caregivers early – often before the baby’s birth or in his or her first year.

A worker visits clients at home, starting with once a week, and gets to know the family and what they have already got sorted and what they need help with. They will work with parents and caregivers to help get the right health care for the child, explain how the baby is growing and changing at different ages, and help parents to work out what they want to achieve, change or improve, and how to make a plan to get there.

Whānau workers can also put families in touch with other services that will help to keep their baby or child safe.

Referrals to Family Start can be made by parents themselves, healthcare professionals or other community workers.

Visit anglicanfamilycare.org.nz or call 0800 FAM CARE (03 477 0801) to find out more.

"My name is Jodi, I've had 5 kids, but only have 1 and a half in my care (I have shared care of my oldest daughter). I first joined Family Start when I was 16 and had my oldest child, who is now nearly 15. I contacted Family Start just before Nirvana was born as I had previously battled addiction and recognised I needed support.

I knew it was going to be difficult. The Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki became involved and were going to have custody of Nirvana once she was born, but with my support network, we managed to keep Nirvana in my care. I ended up going to a supported living home in Christchurch and then was able to get custody. Now, 9 months later, Oranga Tamariki are not involved at all!

Now, I'm definitely more confident with my baby and, working with my whānau worker Nicole weekly, I'm finally able to enjoy life. I have made some new friends and increased my social network.



When Nicole comes out to visit, we read books and play games with Nirvana while we talk for the whole hour.

I'd say to other mums or dads thinking about joining Family Start to definitely go for it. The support and knowledge that the whānau workers have really helps with everyday situations. We are a bi-cultural family, so Nicole has given us some Te Reo books, which is really cool – I wouldn't know where to find them. Nicole brings an activity to try out with every visit."

Whānau worker Nicole says, "Jodi's description is very modest. Both Jodi and Nirvana's father Dylan have completed extensive individual work in the last year, including training through Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, where Jodi was asked to facilitate a Te Reo class. Jodi has advocated for herself and her whānau extensively, attended parenting programmes, worked with Arai Te Uru, Pathways for Women, and both parents have attended counselling. Alongside this, Jodi has had surgery and has somehow managed to meet and engage with me weekly. Nirvana's lovely nature is a testament to the time and effort both parents have put into their daughter's life."

Fun and free things to do with kids this summer

If it rains, go to storytime at your local library.

Go to the Santa Parade on December 3rd, from 3pm on George St, Dunedin.

Collect cardboard tubes, plastic bottles, funnels and shells and make a sand city in your sandpit or at the beach.

Write a list of scavenger hunt items for your kids to find in the garden or neighbourhood.

Make cardboard medals and hold a mini Olympics with races, basketball shots, balancing, long jump into sand and an obstacle course.

Stick down a large bit of paper and use sticks, leaves, flowers, spoons, forks or a fly swat to add paint.

For a treat, use a blindfold and have an icecream taste test. Get them to rate each one and see if they can name the flavours!

Have a toy car wash with sponges and a bowl of soapy water (probably best outside!).

Search for bugs in your garden or neighbourhood then draw them and count how many you find of each.

Feed the ducks and visit the playground at the botanical gardens.

Thank you!

We offer *long-term support* to Otago families who are living in tough circumstances.



A special thank you to everyone who has donated financially over the past three months, or has brought in knitting, toys or clothing for the children and families we support.

We would also like to thank

- The Tindall Foundation
- Bendigo Valley Foundation
- The ACE Shacklock Charitable Trust
- ANZ Staff Foundation
- Dunedin Casino Trust

for their support with grants in the last three months.

This Christmas, would you consider giving *long-term support* by donating \$30 a month in 2018?



Yes!

I would like to make a difference to Otago families

My gift is \$

Please return this form to:
Fundraising Team
Anglican Family Care
266 Hanover Street
Dunedin 9016



Internet Banking:

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Please put your name and "Summer 2017" in the particulars field and your address in the reference field.



Make a donation online at:
AnglicanFamilyCare.org.nz

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Our Charities Commissions Number is CC 24152.

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0800 FAM CARE or 0800 326 2273
AnglicanFamilyCare.org.nz
enquiries@FamilyCare.org.nz