



100 Families WA

Media release

Thursday 28 January 2021

Vulnerable families struggle to keep heads above water with mental health & wellbeing

The 100 Families WA project, the first year-long study of Western Australians living in disadvantage, has found many families are only just being kept “afloat” by support services.

The fourth bulletin to be released by 100 Families WA, a collaboration between the University of WA, WACOSS and seven community service agencies, has looked at the mental health and wellbeing experience of the families involved.

The new research, the first qualitative information to be released by 100 Families WA, uncovered key issues relating to families’ ability to access support and their overall experience, identifying how services could improve their response.

Families reported differing experiences of mental health and wellbeing supports, with some people struggling to access the basics such as affordable and appropriate support, while others were turned away from support services as they ‘did not meet criteria’.

University of Western Australia Director of Social Policy Practice and Research Consortium Dr Susan Young said the spectrum of experience often related to the urgency of the individual’s needs, and rarely ever helps to lift them out of their situation.

“When people step up to receive help, they often run into significant barriers such as location, eligibility criteria and affordability. If someone can secure support, most often it isn’t designed to help transform their situation, but rather survive. This outcome keeps people stuck in poor situations,” said Dr Young.

“They also told us the lack of flexible and accessible mental health supports negatively impacted their overall mental health and wellbeing.

“On top of the problems they were already carrying with them, disadvantaged families further feel ‘othered’ by mainstream society. This alone has a profound impact on their mental wellbeing – in short, families told us: it hurts”.

Overall, the Bulletin reported government and support services need to listen more to families and include them in service design, while breaking down barriers to accessing support. Services must be local, affordable and flexible, with more informal options available.

WACOSS CEO Louise Giolitto said these findings provide deep insight for the sector.

“All families need help sometimes,” said Ms Giolitto.

“Organisations work hard to support the families’ needs, however growing societal demand combined with the increased restrictions on service delivery, can limit their intended potential,” said Ms Giolitto.

“Findings shared by the 100 Families WA project clearly tell us we need to do more to support the mental wellbeing of families experiencing hardship. More accessible and flexible supports would likely place families in better positions to meet some of their other goals”.

[Download the 100 Families WA Perspectives on Mental Health and Wellbeing Bulletin.](#)

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About 100 Families WA

100 Families WA is a collaborative research project with a vision to address the issue of entrenched disadvantage or hardship, as experienced by families living in Western Australia.

The 100 Families WA baseline report was released on 4 September 2019 and forms part of a wider study to understand entrenched disadvantage in Perth. The baseline study involves 400 families, while in-depth interviews with 100 families will continue until 2022.

The baseline report examined the domains of social, health and economic wellbeing, including demographics, family and household composition, income, material deprivation, employment, health, mental health, substance use, wellbeing and quality of life, and adverse life experiences.

WACOSS, Anglicare WA, Ruah Community Services, Wanslea, Jacaranda, Centrecare, Uniting WA, Mercycare, the UWA Social Policy Practice and Research Consortium and the Centre for Social Impact UWA are collaborative partners on the project.

#100FamiliesWA