

Phoenix House – A Spectrum of Sexual Violence Prevention Australia



Type of intervention



Public Education



Individual Work



Counselling

Target group/s, level/s of prevention and sub-group/s:

Additional
Resource

Public Education, Individual Work, Counselling | English

Target population

Phoenix House (PH) provides a whole of community integrated response towards the prevention of sexual violence, as such, it utilises a number of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention programmes across a spectrum of prevention (Cohen & Swift, 1999).

The principal target groups are:

- whole of community
- children, young people and adults who have experienced any form of sexual violence
- children demonstrating sexualised behaviours
- young people and adults who have been sexually abusive, or are at risk of being sexually abusive
- children and young people who have experienced other types of harm for example, domestic violence, emotional abuse and neglect
- organisations and other key stakeholders involved in responding to this population

Delivery organisation

PH is a non-government organisation based in Queensland, Australia.

Mode and context of delivery

PH operates during office hours, as well as providing a 24 hour crisis sexual assault response for recent sexual violence. The organisation can be accessed in person, over the phone or through other forms of digital communication.

Depending on the specific programme, mode of delivery varies widely, for example social marketing might be through media, whereas therapeutic responses might be provided within individual and group interactions.

Level/Nature of staff expertise required

PH is staffed by a multi-disciplinary team of workers. The minimum qualifications that a therapeutic team staff member would be required to hold is a Bachelor Degree in Social Work, Psychology, Teacher or equivalent. Currently the staff team holds Bachelor and Masters Degrees in Forensic Psychology, Pedagogy, Teaching, Social Work, Psychiatric Nursing and Counselling. Staff are also committed to life-long learning and the developing of knowledge and skills in the delivery of a number of therapeutic modalities, such as trauma-focussed CBT, CBT, DBT, narrative therapy and neuro-biologically informed therapies. The PH Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family support worker works across the whole organisation and holds a Certificate IV in Certificate IV in Aboriginal Family Health (Family Violence, Sexual Assault & Child Protection).

Intensity/extent of engagement with target group(s)

This is dependent on the specific programme.

For example:

- Primary prevention: Social marketing campaign: The 'These Hands Are Not For Hurting' bus campaign achieved public exposure to prevention messages for one month in 2013 during daylight hours.
- Secondary prevention: BTPS: A family might receive 11 hours of therapeutic interventions each week for 12 months, depending on their individual needs. This might consist of eight hours BTPS, one hour counselling session for parents and two hours of parent education training.
- Tertiary prevention: Trails of Discovery Equine Therapy: This might consist of working with one family for three hours per week, over eight weeks.
- Situational: The 'Lets Prevent Abuse' puppet show school based programme would consist of six hours of delivery; one hour pre and post teacher preparation and one hour puppet show. The 'Recognising and responding to the sexual behaviours of children and young people' workshop would be provided at the same time for parents and teachers.

Description of intervention

Phoenix House is a Bundaberg based charitable community based organisation committed to the provision of a safe, supportive service which assists those members of our community who have been harmed, are at risk of harm, and/or are willing to address their own harmful behaviours, using a public health approach to the prevention of sexual violence.

In the mid to late 1990's the staff team at PH realised that in order to impact upon the incidence of sexual violence within society, as an organisation they had to move beyond providing the 'ambulance at the bottom of the cliff'. Following the Director of Service's Churchill Fellowship in 2002 (the primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of childhood sexual abuse), a strategic plan was developed to work towards implementing an integrated approach to the prevention of sexual violence. Using a public health approach across the spectrum of prevention of sexual violence, whilst maintaining a gendered analysis, has resulted in some excellent outcomes for individuals and organisations that access PH services.

The range of programmes includes:

- **Primary prevention:**
 - social marketing and community campaigns
 - primary and high school education programmes ('Lets Prevent Abuse' puppet show, Love Bytes high school programme)
 - professional education
 - stakeholder education

- **Secondary prevention:**
 - Bumblebees Therapeutic Preschool
 - working with children and young people who have experienced harm or who are at risk of harm for example, experienced domestic violence, emotional abuse or neglect
 - The Turnaround programme: working with children and young people with sexualised and sexually abusive behaviours
 - a 24 hour crisis sexual assault service

- **Tertiary prevention:**
 - individual and group counselling for children, young people and adults who have been sexually abused and sexually assaulted
 - individual and group counselling for children, young people and adults who have sexualised or sexually abusive behaviours
 - the 'Trails of Discovery' Equine Assisted Therapy programme
 - Stop It Now! Bundaberg.

PH has a strong commitment to social justice and human rights. It is committed to addressing inequalities in society based on gender, ethnicity, culture, age, ability, religion, sexuality, socio-economic status and geographic location, which perpetuate sexual violence. As part of this commitment it strives to provide inclusive services which the community in particular has identified as a priority need, using community based participatory approaches.

A recent example is the Yarning Up! Project, which aimed to identify the key issues in relation to sexual and family violence, faced by the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander communities of the Bundaberg region. A number of key themes were identified, and recommendations made to strengthen community action; to educate the community and the community workers, to provide culturally appropriate and safe organisations and staff and, to address the legal responses to sexual and family violence. Such initiatives ensure the work we do corresponds with what the community wants, rather than the often practiced 'top down' approach of what professionals, organisations and governments believe a community 'needs'.

Evaluation

The evaluation of Phoenix House programmes is undertaken as part of a commitment to evidence-based, best practice. Through a process of engaged research and feedback informed therapy, Phoenix House works to improve outcomes for the population it serves. Phoenix House has developed a ten year partnership with academics from CQ University and Flinders University, during which time a number of qualitative and quantitative research projects have been undertaken. There are currently several research papers and book chapters awaiting publication in 2014-2015, in addition to some of the peer reviewed articles referenced below.

References

Cohen L., & Swift S. (1999). The spectrum of prevention: developing a comprehensive approach to injury prevention. *Injury Prevention*, 5, 203-207.

Kemp, K., Signal, T., Botros, H., Taylor, N., & Prentice, K. (2013). Equine facilitated therapy with children and adults who have been sexually abused: A program evaluation study. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10826-013-9718-1>.

Prentice, K. (2014). *The Yarning Up! project report*. Queensland: Phoenix House

Prentice, K., Signal, T., & Taylor, N. (2012). What's the buzz? Bumblebees: A therapeutic preschool. *Sexual Abuse in Australia and New Zealand*, 4(1): 23-33.

Signal T., Taylor, N., Botros, H., Prentice, K., & Lazarus, K. (2013). Whispering to horses: Childhood sexual abuse, depression and the efficacy of equine facilitated therapy. *Sexual Abuse in Australia and New Zealand*, 5(1), 24-32.

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