

# SENSES FOUNDATION

## Therapy & Specialist Services

### Annual Report

#### 2008-2009

##### Service Review

2008-2009 was a year generally for consolidation in the Therapy & Specialist Services, given the considerable changes in the previous year. During the year there was a change of name, from “Specialist Services” to “Therapy & Specialist Services”, which better reflects and describes the services provided. The dynamic team has remained stable throughout the year, with no departures and a key position filled. Growth has occurred within the Early Childhood Intervention and Adult Services programs to a point where they are fully funded via external sources. Of note, the Specialist Communication program achieved a very positive report from the Standard Monitoring team, with no required actions.

##### Program Information

###### Early Childhood

Contract hours	Hours delivered	Difference (+/-)	Contract client numbers	Clients provided a service
804	1,369	+565	7	12

The Early Childhood program provides a comprehensive professional service for pre-school children who are deafblind or vision impaired with additional disabilities. This program is highly regarded by medical and allied health staff at Princess Margaret Hospital, who have provided the majority of referrals to this program. Additional growth funding was obtained in June 2009, which increased client numbers from 7 to 11. Due to demand, a waitlist had been established and these extra places were quickly filled.

Significantly more hours have been delivered within this program than what has been funded by DSC. This intensive service delivery demonstrates the high needs of the children, but it also presents some sustainability issues. Several strategies have been developed to maintain

a high quality service but without the excessive hours currently provided. These include the incorporation of a group based program, “HydoActive” and “Little Explorers”, transition towards “block therapy”, where only one discipline is involved at a time and more education and training to caregivers about the evidence that demonstrates better outcomes are achieved if therapy program can be integrated into everyday practice and routines.

The majority of children within this program have multiple disabilities and require significant aides and appliances for their mobility, activities of daily living and communication. An agreement was been established during the year with Princess Margaret Hospital, that this equipment has been prescribed by the Therapy & Specialist Services team and purchased through their DSC funded Community Aides and Equipment Program.

### Adult Therapy Services

Contract hours	Hours delivered	Difference (+/-)	Contract client numbers	Clients provided a service
680	772	+92	34	54

The Adult Therapy Service program provides a comprehensive professional service for adults (who have left school and are less than 65 years), with a level 2 or 3 registered disability. The majority of clients previously within this program were part of Senses Foundation’s supported accommodation program, but with successful marketing, clients are now being received across the disability sector. Importantly, a number of these clients are deafblind.

The Therapy & Specialist Service team have provided services to a significantly larger number of clients than DSC have contracted Senses Foundation to provide (20 people more). Hours of service delivery have also been exceeded. The large number of clients that have received a service indicates the high need for therapies for adults with disabilities. Staff have provided a consultative service delivery model to clients, with an assessment, program developed, their families or support workers trained on how to support the program and then a review. A number of clients have also been referred on to other appropriate services. Senses Foundation is very well positioned to further expand this service and become a significant provider of Adult Therapy Services in the near future.

Senses Foundation was successful in receiving recurrent growth funding in June 2009 to provide therapy services to young adults transitioning from school to alternatives to employment. Non-recurrent funding was also obtained to deliver Adult Therapy Services to eligible adults on the waitlist.

Another group of people that are now supported by the Adult Therapy Services program is those who have Ushers Syndrome. The Social Worker from Therapy & Specialist Services facilitates and organises the Ushers Support Group. This group provides the opportunity for people with Ushers Syndrome to discuss individual and group issues, advocacy, provide information, as well as providing recreation activities, such as water skiing and rock climbing.



## Specialist Communication

Contract hours	Hours Delivered	Difference (+/-)	Contract client Numbers	Clients provided a service
2,231	2,292	+61	60	69

The Specialist Communication program provides specialist assistance and communication support to deafblind or vision impaired people throughout Western Australia. The Specialist Communication program is a targeted service, which is defined as 'single focused, highly specified and unique services that is client centred and complementary to other services.' It has a shorter term, outcomes orientated focus and are delivered within a consultative service model. This was not the case for the Specialist Communication program in 2008.

As a result, significant changes occurred within this program during the end of 2008 and early 2009. Most notably were the redundancies of the Communication Facilitators. The Communication Facilitators were providing a long-term, weekly service to a small number of clients, which was not the intention of the program and therefore this service needed to cease. These redundancies and withdrawal of services to clients was managed well, with good communication to all parties concerned. Only one complaint was received. The Communication Facilitators were provided with the opportunity to reallocate into other departments with Senses Foundation (eg. Alternatives to Employment, Accommodation Services).

A significant achievement within the Specialist Communication program was the recruitment of Angela Wills, as our Deafblind Consultant. Angela was recruited from the UK and has extensive experience within sensory impairment teams. She has a qualification as a Rehabilitation Worker and qualified in providing Orientation and Mobility training. This position had remained vacant for a period of approximately 12 months.

Senses Foundation has been able to achieve its strategic direction of providing services to regional and remote areas of Western Australia through the Specialist Communication Program. Services were provided to Albany through 2 trips, where 4 clients received consultation services and to Margaret River, where an education session was provided to business groups. Due to success Telethon and Royalty to Region grants, services to regional and remote areas in 2009-2010 will be increased.

## **The Therapy & Specialist Services Team**

- Matthew Wittorff, Manager – Therapy & Specialist Services, commenced in April 2008. He commenced a Graduate Certificate in Not-for-Profit Leadership & Management at Notre Dame University in 2009, which he received a scholarship from DSC for.
- Melissa Evans, Physiotherapist joined Senses Foundation in August 2007 and works 18 hrs per week. She has been instrumental in developing the HyrdoActive group.
- Karen Wickham, Social Worker, commenced a Masters of Social Work in 2008, has achieved excellent grades and was successful obtaining a scholarship to help support her studies.
- Fiona Kemp, Occupational Therapist was successful in obtaining a performance based salary increase in 2008-2009. She has invested a portion of this income into self-funding attendance at national conferences.
- Melanie Robartson, Speech Pathologist commenced with Senses Foundation in June 1 day per week, which she increased to 2 days during the 2008-2009 period.
- Angela Wills, Deafblind Consultant, is full-time and has her Probation Review in July 2009.

## **Standards Monitoring**

### Specialist Communication

This program was monitored in April – May 2009. The monitor has completed only a draft report with the final report not yet provided by DSC. In the draft report, the monitor did not identify any required actions during the monitoring visit. The monitor identified the following opportunities for service improvement:

#### **Standard 2 - Individual Needs - *Getting the right help***

2.1 The Specialist Communication Service reviews policies and procedures relevant to Standard 2 to ascertain if they reflect the newly developed consultancy model and actions any findings.

2.2 Given the infancy of the consultancy, the service could be reviewed again in approximately 18 months to ascertain if it is making anticipated progress and meeting the needs of all service recipients.

### **Standard 3 - Decision Making and Choice - *Having choices and making decisions***

3.1 When the service has further developed and consolidated, a Specialist Communication Service handbook could be developed. An important inclusion should be the rights and responsibilities of all clients, including consumers and staff from other organisations.

### **Standard 7 - Complaints and Disputes - *Sorting out problems***

7.1 Make the brochure 'Complaints Compliments and Ideas' available on the Senses Foundation website.

### **Standard 8 - Service Management - *Running the service well***

8.1 The organisation to set in place a process to ensure that part time staff have the same opportunities for emergency evacuation training as full time staff.

The monitor was particularly impressed by:

- The presentation of staff policies and procedures, including the ease of access to specific relevant information for staff in each service.
- The professional and sensitive way that that the recent restructure of The Specialist Communication Service was undertaken.
- The experience, knowledge and skill of staff working within this service.
- The organisation's efforts to ensure that the skills of highly specialised staff are shared with other members of the disability sector.
- The efforts to promote and advocate for deafblind people, nationally and internationally.

## **Projects & Grants**

### **1. Deafblind DVD Training Package**

DSC provided \$33,226 to Senses Foundation for the development of a Deafblind DVD Training Package. This project is near completion, with a number of quality DVD's being produced.

### **2. Equipment for Learning**

The Department of Education and Training, Non-Government Centre Support (NGCS) provided \$4,872 to the purchase of a range of computer software and technology to develop communication and learning of children in the Early Childhood program.

**3. Active Ageing at the Local Level Grant: Responding to Ageing and Dual Sensory Loss – A Training Package for Support Workers**

This project was funded \$15,484 by the Department of Local Government & Regional Development. The training package has been developed however this information now needs to be produced into a booklet.

**4. “SibShop” Project**

Telethon Channel 7 provided Senses Foundation with \$10,000 from 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2008 to implement the “Sibshop Project”. A series of three ‘Sibshop’ workshops have been run by Karen Wickham at Senses Foundation. The aim of these workshops is to provide brothers and sisters of children with special needs a chance to meet other siblings in a relaxed recreational setting and give opportunities to discuss common joys, concerns and have fun. These sessions are facilitated by a consultant Clinical Psychologist. All the kids reported having fun and enjoyed the morning. They were able to share some information about themselves, their families and their hopes and dreams for themselves and their sibling. The parents that attended also had fun and were able to gain an insight into their children’s experiences.





As part of the “Sibshop” program, an event was conducted at the Swan Valley Cuddly Animal Farm on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> of November, 2008. Families and siblings were given the chance to reconnect with old friends, meet new Senses families and interact with all the friendly animals.



##### **5. Parents Respite Project**

Carers’ W.A., through their Family Leadership & Initiative Group Project provided Senses Foundation with \$22,432 from 1 January 2007 to 31 October 2008, for this project. The project aims to provide a retreat for family carers to take a break from the caring role and to learn skills, coping mechanisms and resources that will enable them to continue to provide support and assistance to their family member. During 2008-2009, Senses Foundation provided a Mother’s Pampering Day Event that gave mothers of children with a disability the opportunity to take some time for themselves, have lunch, manicure and socialise with others.

**6. Usher Support Group**

Senses Foundation have continued to support this group financially, however funding was obtained \$14,768.75 from the Australian Communication Exchange (Friends of ACE Support), to support the Usher Support Group. The focus of this group is on providing education, support and counselling to people with Usher Syndrome. This is imparted through presentations by experts in this specialist field and support networks/agencies within the community.

**7. Optimising Communication Through Community Access for Children Who Are Deafblind**

NGCS provided Senses Foundation \$50,866 from 1 June 2007 to 31 December 2008 to enable access to and active participation in community-based activities which will foster language and communication development, as well as socialisation for children who are deafblind. Three Speech Pathology students were employed as Communication Facilitators under this project and are providing support to a number of children. Unfortunately Senses Foundation was not successful in receiving further funding to maintain this project past December 2008.

**8. Mobile Sensory Equipment**

The Department of Education and Training (NGCS), provided \$9,105 to fund various equipment and toys that would enable the therapy staff to take on home and community visits which may promote vision and hearing skills.

**Matthew Wittorff  
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Senses Foundation Inc.**