

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS

NSW CHILD AND FAMILY HEALTH

Celebrating 100 years

In late 1914 and early 1915, the first public services providing child and family health care to NSW children and their families opened their doors. In metropolitan Sydney, the first Baby Health Centres opened for business, and in rural areas the Department of Public Health funded Bush Nurses. The services had a marked impact on child health outcomes in a very short time, and the benefits from the services have continued to grow over the last 100 years. The services have operated under a number of names over time, and in different places. However, it doesn't matter whether the services were called Baby Health Centres, Early Childhood Health Services, or Child and Family Health, the contribution the services have made to children's health over the century are well worth celebrating!

When are the celebrations?

There is a Key Dates calendar with descriptions of activity taking place across the NSW Child and Family Health Centres. The link can be found at: <http://www.kidsfamilies.health.nsw.gov.au/trainingeducation/events/celebrating-100-years-of-child-and-family-health-in-nsw/>

Getting involved

Each of the Local Health Districts is holding their own celebrations at different times during 2014 and 2015. Contact your local Child and Family Health Service to find out what is being arranged.

About Child and Family Health Centres

The first baby clinic opened in Alexandria in 1914, followed by Newtown and Darlinghurst. As well, 20 Bush Nurses were funded in rural NSW by the Department of Public Health. This was the beginning of community based, publicly funded child and family health services in NSW.

By 1939, there were 211 Baby Health Centres in NSW, and over 74 Bush Nurses. By 1964, there were 415 Centres in NSW. Today, across NSW there are over 500 Early Childhood Health Centres, staffed by qualified Child and Family Health Nurses.

The early focus was on reducing infant mortality as in 1914 about one in 10 children died before they turned

one. Nearly 7.4 million babies have been born in NSW over the past 100 years, with the majority having been seen by a Child and Family Health Nurse.

Role of Child and Family Health Centres

The role of Child and Family Health Centres is to:

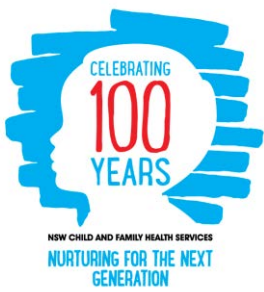
- provide family care, clinical support and advice to families, relatives, and other community professionals
- work with families during the antenatal period, including supporting sensitive parenting and developing nurturing parent-child relationships
- respond to the unique needs of each family
- identify and respond to actual and potential health issues and help families to make changes to improve their family's health
- identify and address the needs of families who need extra support, ensuring that while everyone is offered a service, people who need more intensive services receive them as early as possible so that the health of all children and families is the best possible
- promote health across the broader community
- work with communities to improve how local communities support families.

What do nurses do?

Child and Family Health Nurses work together with each family to look at the unique situation of the family and what they can do to promote better health. Today, nurses are well educated and up-to-date, and their practice is based on the best available training, evidence and research.

A nurse not only thinks about health as an absence of disease, but as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing. Nurses strive to work with each family not just to be well, but to be as healthy as they can possibly be.

Some of the services that nurses deliver include health checks, early intervention for developmental problems, or immunisations. Sometimes a nurse will identify other issues that affect a family's health, such as housing problems and employment issues, or family violence, and, in these cases, nurses need to connect families to other services to get them the help they need.



Number of babies born and cared for

Child and Family Health Nurses provide clinical health services for the almost 100,000 children born in NSW each year. Every family with a newborn is offered the support of a Child and Family Health Nurse.

Number of home visits per year

Each year, this service sees most of the almost 100,000 babies born for their first health check. About half of these families continue to use the service throughout the first year.

The nurses regularly see about one-third of one to four year olds each year. When children turn four, the majority (99,677 in 2013/14) are also offered free visual acuity screening through the StEPS program, in preschools and Early Childhood Health Centres (another NSW Health child health free service). Seventy-five per cent of these children accepted the offer and were screened.

The changing focus of Child and Family Health Nurses over the decades

In 1914, the main work of a Child and Family Health Nurse was:

- Antenatal care
- Supporting breastfeeding
- Teaching 'the hygiene of infancy'
- Monitoring growth
- Infant nutrition.

The focus was on reducing infant mortality. Today, the infant mortality rate has dropped to 4.63 deaths for every 1000 live births, with a 95 per cent decrease in death rate for children aged 0 to four years. In 2014, the average life expectancy of males is 79.9 years and females 84.3 years.

In 2014, the Child and Family Health Nurses still provide enormous support for breastfeeding, infant nutrition, the importance of hygiene in the first year, and monitoring growth. However, reducing infant mortality is no longer of major concern for Child and Family Health Nurses and they no longer provide antenatal care. Instead, there is a greater focus on promoting immunisation, advice on safe sleeping, and dealing with maternal post-natal depression.

Today, the commitment to improved maternal and child health leading to improved parent education, nutrition and hygiene is vitally important. Child and Family Health Nurses are at the frontline in achieving this.

Facts and figures

1. In 2014, over 500 Early Childhood Health Centres, staffed by qualified Child and Family Health Nurses across NSW.
2. Over the last 100 years, almost 7.4 million babies have been born in NSW.
3. Child and Family Health provides clinical services for the almost 100,000 children born in NSW each year.
4. A century ago, more than 100 out of every 1000 children born alive died before they turned one. Causes were predominately gastroenteritis and other infections.
5. Today, less than 5 children per 1000 die.
6. For the first decade of the 20th century, male children had a life expectancy of 55.2 years and females 58.4 years. In 2014, the average life expectancy of males is now 79.9 years and females 84.3 years.