



## Flexibility key to educating and empowering expectant parents

Becoming a parent for the first time is an exciting time but can also be filled with trepidation and uncertainty, so providing help to navigate the pathway is an important step to becoming confident parents.

That's what Plunket's Pregnancy and Parenting Education (PPE) Programme delivers. Run in the South Island under contract to the Canterbury, South Canterbury (Waimate only), Southern and West Coast DHBs, the programme supported almost 2,500 parents in 2017 as they started on their journey, providing information about labour, the birthing process and what to expect in the first six weeks.

"For me, it is about Plunket being a part of a parents' journey from the very beginning. We give them all the information they need as new parents in a safe and welcoming environment, so they can make informed choices for their family," says Tessa Barnes, PPE Manager.

The programme is offered as evening or weekend sessions, with some programmes available that are tailored to specific groups, including Asian families, Youth (under 24 years) and a 1:1 service for those where a class setting may not be appropriate for their personal circumstances.

The PPE team is currently developing a new model of delivery to support Māori whānau. "We knew the name of our service was a barrier when engaging with Māori. Working with two iwi providers in the Southern DHB, we are very proud to be gifted a name by them – Kōpūtanga. Kōpū meaning Pepi growing in a safe environment and Tanga meaning a passive ending," says Tessa.

Feedback from parents is overwhelmingly positive and there are plans to increase the tailored programmes through collaboration with other community groups. However, this is dependent on the programme securing additional funding.

"Of course you're never going to know where and when people are going to become pregnant, but now our systems are integrated and we have feedback about the programme, we are able to be more flexible and understand where those needs may arise and can adapt."

Tessa is particularly proud of the way the team of qualified facilitators work together. "They all have different backgrounds and perspectives, but it's great to see how they come together to support each other and share their knowledge."

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