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New child protection campaign supports vulnerable families

South Western Sydney Local Health District is the first District in the state to implement national Child Aware approaches and launch a campaign to support vulnerable families.

The campaign assists staff to recognise early indications of stress or risk and help families to access the support they need, intervening early to promote child safety and wellbeing and reduce the risk of child abuse or neglect.

Director of Child Protection, Lisa McCue said the campaign, *Child Protection in Your Hands*, introduces staff to a new way of approaching child wellbeing and protection to address the high prevalence of child abuse and neglect in the south western Sydney region.

“Child safety, welfare and wellbeing is everyone’s business. The campaign encourages all staff to start a conversation with patients who are parents and understand how we integrate that within their care to best support the family,” said Ms McCue.

Without the right support, frequent or prolonged adversity such as physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect, caregiver substance abuse, mental illness, exposure to domestic violence or economic hardship can impact children’s cognitive, emotional, physical and social development.

“A parent or carer’s health issues can affect a child’s wellbeing and sometimes families may need extra support to deal with the issues that they are experiencing,” said Ms McCue.

Dr Serena Ayers, Director of Emergency Medicine at Liverpool Hospital said health professionals are well placed to identify families who may need some extra support.

“Vulnerable and at risk children and families typically access health services more often. As health providers, we’re in a good position to identify parental issues or pressures that may affect a child’s wellbeing.

“Working closely with families, we can offer assistance or referrals in response to carer issues that may compromise a parent’s ability to provide a stable emotional environment for their children,” Ms Ayers said.

Child Protection in Your Hands adopts national Child Aware Approaches and reinforces the District’s commitment to the prevention and early intervention of children at risk of abuse or neglect.