

WORKING WITH FAMILIES, THE ROLE OF THE DEVELOPMENTAL PAEDIATRICIAN AND SOCIAL WORKER IN THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT UNIT

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The assessment of children at Child Development Units requires the co-ordinated inputs of a wide range of professionals to get the clearest possible picture. Each member of this team provides an essential element towards developing that understanding about each child's development. In South West Sydney, the developmental paediatrician and the social worker are part of that partnership, working with families to best appreciate their social and cultural environments.

The developmental paediatrician's role is in ascertaining the nature and extent of a child's disability, also in identifying any physical causes and the implications of the disability. This is important in order to be able to plan which interventions, therapies and services would best meet the needs of that child and family. The developmental paediatrician is able to advocate for the child and family in the application of requests for services and therapies and in the ongoing management and coordination of the child's needs as well as to address the families' questions about the causes of their child's disability.

The social worker has a role in supporting families of children with disabilities. By working with families, psychological and social implications of the disability can be identified and addressed. This may relate to a number of issues such as loss and grief or other stresses, which the family is facing. The social worker is able to help with practical issues such as accommodation, financial, child care or respite.

It is then the team approach of the Child Development Unit that is best able to address the issues which impact on the life of the child and family through an holistic approach. Their focus is on the well being of the family unit and ultimately of the child.