

Position Description

Title:	Infant Mental Health Consultant, Safe Haven Initiative
Business unit:	Early Learning
Location:	22 Church Street, Richmond VIC 3121
Employment type:	Part-time (30.4 hours per fortnight), maximum-term to December 2025
Reports to:	As per employment agreement

About Uniting

Uniting Vic.Tas is the community services organisation of the Uniting Church. We've been supporting people and families for over 100 years. We work alongside people of all ages in local communities in Victoria and Tasmania. Our services reach to Albury-Wodonga in the north, Mallacoota in East Gippsland, the Wimmera region in the west, and across Tasmania.

We empower children, young people and families to learn and thrive. We're there for people experiencing homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction or mental illness. We support people with disability to live the life they choose. We assist older people to maintain their independence and enjoy life. We provide opportunities to access training and meaningful employment. We're proud to welcome and support asylum seekers to our community. We work to empower people with the information, skills and tools they need to live a healthy, happy life.

As an organisation, we work in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's First Peoples and as the traditional owners and custodians of this land. We celebrate diversity and value the lived experience of people of every ethnicity, faith, age, disability, culture, language, gender identity, sex and sexual orientation. We welcome lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse and non-binary, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ+) people at our services. We pledge to provide inclusive and non-discriminatory services.

Our purpose: To inspire people, enliven communities and confront injustice

Our values: We are imaginative, respectful, compassionate and bold

1. About the program

Cooke Court Uniting was selected by the Department of Education (VIC) as the site for an intensive early childhood education and care research project, as part of their Safe Haven budget initiative. The research project is being undertaken in partnership with Parkville Institute, a not-for-profit organisation established to operationalise and evaluate the program. The Australian government and philanthropy are also funding the project.

The results from previous trials have found that children who participated in an intensive early education and care program had significant improvement in their cognitive (IQ and language) and non-cognitive skills (resilience and social-emotional).

The University of Melbourne research team undertook a rigorous evaluation of the model and some members - have established Parkville Institute to continue the work (Research reports can be found at <https://fbe.unimelb.edu.au/research/streams/health-and-wellbeing/Changing-lives>)

The objective of the intensive early childhood education and care program is that children living with significant adversity will experience a stable and enriching early learning and care program and enter school as confident and successful learners who are developmentally equal to their peers. The long-term objective of the model is that these children will enjoy the same life trajectories as their peers.

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This research will seek to determine whether children, recruited with the same eligibility criteria as those in previous trials, can achieve the same remarkable learning and development outcomes. This will be one of four research sites established in Australia.

2. Position purpose

The Infant Mental Health consultant in the Cooke Court Uniting research centre has overall responsibility for leading the implementation of the Infant Mental Health elements of the model which is nested within the usual childcare legislative requirements and with a commitment to the mission and values of Uniting Tas/Vic and the Parkville Institute. This is a key leadership and advanced practice role. The Infant Mental Health consultant contributes specialist infant mental health knowledge and skills to the curriculum and pedagogy implemented by the teachers and educators. It is a collaborative endeavour, involving expertise, inquiry and critical reflection.

3. Scope

Budget:

Nil

People:

Nil

4. Relationships

Internal

- Executive Officer, Early Learning
- Area Manager
- Early Learning Program Manager
- Centre Director
- Pedagogical Leader
- Teachers and Educators
- Family Services Practitioner
- Uniting Support Services as required

External

- Children
 - Families and caregivers
 - Representatives of The Parkville Institute
 - Referring Agencies
 - Other community service organisations as required
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5. Key responsibility areas

General responsibilities:

- Contribute to the implementation of an intensive early childhood education and care program using the knowledge and skill base of the field of infant mental health.
 - Collaborate with the senior leadership team in the implementation of a trauma informed, attachment focused program for children (the model).
 - Contribute to the implementation of a high-quality learning environment informed by attachment and trauma theories.
 - Provide an infant mental health perspective on program implementation and centre operations, anticipating issues or practices and protocols that may have emotional saliency for children and families living with family stress and social disadvantage to ensure that the program supports the emotional wellbeing of the children and families.
 - Model and foster respectful relationships with children that reflect the principles of high expectations and inclusion.
 - Advise teachers and educators and other staff on individualized and differentiated teaching and caring strategies to reduce the behavioural and emotional dysregulation resulting from living with toxic stress so that the children can become successful learners.
 - Support staff to provide a supportive education and care environment, to be thoughtful about their interactions with children, building relationships that will be central for supporting children's social and emotional development and capacity for behavioural regulation.
 - Conduct an infant mental health assessment for each child as the first step in their participation at the centre.
 - Develop an orientation and attendance plan with each family with a focus on supporting children to experience their educator as a secure base supporting separation and independent participation without distress.
 - Help staff understand the subjective experience of individual children given the child's experience and individual ways of responding to threats to attachment security and exposure to trauma and loss.
 - If indicated, attend the 12-weekly family review and goal setting meetings, and advise about referrals for specialist help.
 - Provide supervision, mentoring and coaching for staff to support them to respond to the individual emotional needs of children and deal with the emotional demands of working with children living with significant family stress and disadvantage.
 - Provide formal scheduled fortnightly infant mental health consultation for each room
 - Provide informal consultations to educators about individual children as needed.
 - Co-lead with the Parkville Senior Curriculum and Pedagogy Advisor, bi-monthly multidisciplinary practice workshops with the whole staff of the centre.
 - Attend leadership team meetings.
 - Share high-level knowledge and research evidence about infant mental health to support teachers and educators in achieving progress with program goals.
 - Be available to provide brief consultation to children and families with a view to referral if further input is required.
 - Be available to provide further observation or consultations about individual children if new or ongoing concerns about emotional distress or behavioural or relationship issues would benefit from infant mental health perspective.
 - Support teachers and educators in building collaborative partnerships with families especially when specialist mental health knowledge is relevant.
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Quality and managing risk:

- Comply with Workplace Health and Safety procedures.
- Ensure compliance as a mandated reporter in accordance with the service's Child Protection Policy.
- Support the protection of rights and the dignity of all children attending the service.
- Ensure that the environment supports the mental health of children, families and staff.

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People and teams:

- Ensure staff have a sound knowledge of attachment theory, infant and toddler emotional development and trauma informed practice.
- Work with the Senior Leadership team and Parkville Institute staff in supporting the professional learning and development of staff working in the service.
- **Work in** collaboration with the Senior Leadership team in developing and implementing the professional development program within the service.
- In collaboration with the Senior Leadership team support a culture of reflective practice that supports informed decision making and continuous improvement.
- Collaborate with the Parkville Institute staff and Senior Leadership team in the induction into the model for staff and their orientation into the centre.
- Collaborate with the Senior Leadership team in reflection and discussion relating to the inclusion of all children within the program, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with a disability and other children experiencing social disadvantage, trauma and in out-of-home care.
- Collaborate with Senior Leadership team and staff from Parkville Institute to review and evaluate the overall quality of the pedagogy and curriculum and its alignment with the program model.
- Undertake regular supervision with designated Program Manager and the Parkville Institute senior advisor (infant mental health) and provide feedback to promote collaborative working relationships.
- Undertake performance review with Program Manager
- Communicate regularly with the Program Manager and Parkville Institute team as part of ensuring program quality

Personal accountability

- Team members are required to read, understand and comply with all the Uniting Early Learning policies, procedures and reasonable direction, whilst demonstrating professional workplace behaviours in accordance with the Uniting's Code of Conduct.
- Compliance with Uniting's values, code of conduct, policies and procedures and relevant government legislation and standards where relevant.
- Cooperate with strategies to actively ensure the safety, protection and well-being of children who come into association with us.
- Ensure appropriate use of resources.
- Work collaboratively with Uniting (Victoria Tasmania) employees and external stakeholders in accordance with Uniting's values and professional standards of behaviour.
- Actively participate in initiatives to maintain, build upon and promote a positive and collaborative workplace.
- Identify opportunities to integrate and work collaboratively across teams.
- Take reasonable care for your own health and safety, and health and safety of others (to the extent required).
- Promote a positive safety culture by contributing to health and safety consultation and communication.
- Promptly respond to and report health and safety hazards, incidents and near misses to line management
- Attend mandatory training sessions (i.e. equal employment opportunity, health, and safety) and mandatory training specific to position.
- Declare anything that you become aware of through the course of your engagement which may impede your suitability to work with children and/or young people.
- Declare any potential or actual conflict of interest that you become aware of through the course of your engagement:
 - based on a relationship with a current member of Uniting's workforce; or
 - based on my ongoing work with another organisation.

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6. Person specification

Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree in a mental health discipline (psychology, social work, occupational therapy, speech pathology, psychiatric nursing).
- Postgraduate qualification or equivalent extensive advanced training in infant and child mental health.
- Eligibility for membership of relevant professional body and/or applicable registration /licence depending on professional qualifications.
- Victorian Working with Children Check.
- National Police Criminal History Check.

Experience

- Senior practitioner with at least seven years of experience working with infants and toddlers in a direct clinical care role within an infant mental health service or similar.
- Experience providing secondary consultation to non-mental health agencies working with infants and toddlers.
- Specialised knowledge of infant mental health theory and concepts including developmental psychology and infant research, psychoanalytic theory, attachment theory, and neurobiology.
- Advanced practice skills in providing specialist assessments of infant and toddler emotional and social development and functioning.
- Advanced skills in engaging, assessing and treating infants exposed to trauma and those living with significant social disadvantage.
- Advanced practice skills and experience in the treatment of infants and toddlers including those living with significant family stress and social disadvantage.
- Ability to think flexibly and creatively to translate knowledge of infant mental health concepts and practices to educators and other staff in practical ways.
- Ability to work effectively and respectfully in a leadership role within a multidisciplinary team where mental health is not the core discipline or main program focus.
- Ability to support the capacity for reflective practice in other disciplines.
- Experience providing reflective supervision.
- Highly developed interpersonal, verbal and written communication skills.
- Ability to provide education to staff of other disciplines.
- Ability to facilitate professional discussions and lead and support critical reflection in all aspects of program delivery across the service in consultation with relevant stakeholders.
- The ability to plan, work and manage time effectively with minimal supervision.
- Ability to challenge and support early childhood teachers and educators to improve their professional knowledge and practice skills as teachers and educators.
- Well-developed leadership and self-motivation skills.
- Ability to identify and utilise people's strengths and build relationships.

Core selection criteria

- **Values alignment:** ability to demonstrate and authentically promote Uniting's values respect the uniqueness and value of every individual; establish and maintain ethical relationships that enable people to be influential in their own support arrangement and ensure they are treated with dignity and respect; build on strengths and abilities of all; demonstrate transparency and accountability; strong leadership skills and knowledge.
- **Child safety:** demonstrated ability to provide safe environments for children and young people and protect them from abuse and neglect.
- **Communication:** Strong and clear communication skills with the ability to build positive professional relationships with families, children, teachers, educators and other professionals; excellent interpersonal skills; high level written and verbal communication skills.
- **Teamwork:** cooperates and works well with others in pursuit of team goals; collaborates and shares information; shows consideration, concern and respect for others' feelings and ideas;

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accommodates and works well with the different working styles of others; encourages and supports respectful resolution of conflict within the group; willingness to be actively supporting others; contributes to the continuous improvement of an ethical, positive, collaborative and effective work environment.

- **Quality assurance:** ability to support the development and implementation of a high quality education and care program for children; committed to continuity of individual learning and development and building multi-disciplinary professional practice; ability to operate in an inclusive and supportive learning environment
- **Problem solving:** demonstrates creativity and innovation; can be flexible and resilient and quickly adapt to the work environment; have developed skills in engaging children and families in different ways.

Research: Understand the importance of research in early education and the implications for evidence informed practice; be committed to supporting the research component of the project in partnership with the Parkville Institute, DET and Uniting (Victoria/ Tasmania).

7. We are a child safe organisation

Uniting is a child safe organisation and is committed in everyday practice to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children, at all times. As a child safe organisation, employment with Uniting is subject to a satisfactory national (and international where relevant) police check and relevant Working With Children Check (and NDIS Worker Screening Check where relevant) to your State prior to commencement of any paid or unpaid work and/or participation in any service or undertaking.

This position description is subject to review and may change in accordance with Uniting's operational, service and consumer requirements.

8. Acknowledgement

I have read, understood, and accepted the above Position Description

	Employee	Manager
Name:		
Signature:		
Date:		
