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## **Children and Families Hub launches in Rockdale to improve local educational outcomes**

An innovative partnership between local community, education and health organisations has launched a unique service to help address developmental challenges in children aged under five years in the Rockdale area.

The Rockdale Children and Families Hub (The Hub) is an integrated approach that brings services directly to the community through two central points of care – Rockdale Public School and Integricare Rockdale.

Michelle Jubelin, Director Child Youth and Family Services, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD), said that the need for a place-based, proactive service was identified through research which uncovered that in Rockdale, 23 per cent of children showed undetected developmental vulnerabilities when starting school – which is above the state average of 20 per cent.

“We understand that children from culturally and linguistically diverse families are more vulnerable to slipping through the cracks, as families are less likely to access health services due to barriers such as poor health literacy or unfamiliarity with services,” Ms Jubelin said.

“In the St George region, 41 per cent of residents are born in a non-English speaking country. This means that taking early intervention support services directly to families is an important step in shaping the long-term health and wellbeing of local children.”

The Hub offers playgroups, family support, parenting information, transition to school activities and resources, child and family health services and support for families with children with additional needs, as well as links with childcare, pre-schools and Rockdale Public School.

Staff working within The Hub, including nurses, are able to facilitate referrals between services on behalf of families, such as with a paediatrician or allied health or developmental assessment services.

Domenic Valastro, CEO, Integricare, said the aim of The Hub is to decrease the proportion of children enrolling in kindergarten with undetected or under-managed developmental concerns.

“Long term, we hope to ensure that a child enters school with their developmental needs addressed early, as this will result in improved educational outcomes,” Mr Valastro said.

“We know that the first 2,000 days of a child’s life – between birth and five years of age – provide a crucial window of opportunity to support children and their families to have the best possible start to school and learning. That’s why at The Hub our focus is to have a one-stop-shop of information and services to enhance development in these early years.

“The Rockdale Children and Families Hub welcomes all families attending an Integricare service or Rockdale Public School to connect with other families and use the services,” Mr Valastro said.

Several local agencies have partnered together to deliver The Hub, including SESLHD, Integricare, Department of Education, Rockdale Community Services, Barnardos, Life start Family and Community Services and Advance Diversity Services.

For more information, please visit: <https://rockdale-p.schools.nsw.gov.au/> or <https://integricare.org.au/rockdale/>