



MEASURING THE OUTCOMES AND QUALITY OF REDKITE'S CONNECT GROUPS (JANUARY 2020 – JUNE 2021)

Background

Connect Groups are online groups facilitated by Redkite Social Workers that enable family members and those around them to connect with each other. Each group focuses on a theme that might be common to the childhood cancer experience. These might be focused on different types of support people (e.g., Mums; Dads; Grandparents), or the childhood cancer experience itself (e.g., Newly diagnosed; End of treatment; Brain tumours.). Connect Groups typically consist of around six to eight people who come together on a video call to talk about their experiences and share tips for overcoming challenges they may be facing. As part of Redkite's commitment to continually develop and improve our services, which includes measuring the outcomes of our programs, all Connect Group participants are invited to complete a short evaluation survey.

Objectives

The objectives of this evaluation were to:

1. Understand to what extent the Connect Groups contribute to the following **outcomes** for clients which, in turn, help to improve the overall quality of life for families affected by childhood cancer:



families have meaningful connections throughout their child's cancer experience



families are confident and equipped to navigate the impacts of childhood cancer



where children with cancer and their families are better able to manage their emotional and mental health

2. Gather feedback from families around the **quality** of the Connect Groups

The survey

Between January 2020 and June 2021, Redkite conducted 26 Connect Groups with 121 family members facing childhood cancer. Of these individuals, 53 completed a short feedback survey which was emailed to participants after the group. This resulted in a response rate of 44%.

Respondents attended Connect Groups based on a range of different themes or subgroups of supporters. This included bereavement as well as a group for dads, for grandparents, parents of children with a brain tumour, parents of newly diagnosed children and parents with children who had completed treatment.



EXTENT TO WHICH THE CONNECT GROUPS DELIVER KEY OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES



Based on the data collected, Redkite's Connect Groups are positively contributing to the following outcome themes (or 'domains') overall, and subsequent individual outcomes:



CONNECTION

Feeling less alone

77%

of participants reported feeling less alone after attending a Connect Group.

Connected with other families facing childhood cancer

98%

of participants valued being able to share their experiences and/ or hear from others in the Connect Group.



I can't thank you enough for...allowing fathers to connect, I believe it to be extremely important and valuable for myself and others to understand and learn from each other, absolutely lifesaving.



EMPOWERMENT

Information and knowledge to navigate childhood cancer

92%

of participants found the input from facilitators helpful.

Skills and resources to better support themselves and their family

92%

of participants found the Connect Group discussion useful.

68%

of participants left the Connect Group with some new ideas that will help them manage day to day.



(About) new experiences or activities that give people other things to talk to you about, rather than just the loss of your child.



EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING

Feeling heard and understood

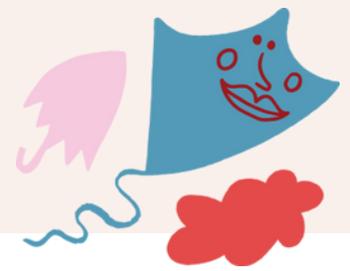
96%

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that the Connect Group helped them feel that it's not unusual to feel the way they do in their situation.



That it's ok to feel stressed... giving yourself permission to be sad and stressed, but also giving yourself permission to do something, whatever it is, to alleviate some of that stress.

KEY FINDINGS – PROGRAM QUALITY



100%

participants strongly agreed or agreed that the facilitators helped them to feel comfortable in the Connect Group.

92%

of participants were comfortable with the size of the Connect Group.

91%

of participants would recommend attending a Connect Group to others.

75%

of participants strongly agreed or agreed that the Connect Group met their expectations.



It was an excellent and safe space to be able to be open and honest and raw... to be able to say it as it is/was and to be totally accepted and understood ... the caring and sharing of the other participants ... there isn't another place where that is available. I felt it was good to be able to talk with/hear from others who had/who were walking the walk... who understood exactly what you were saying.

CONCLUSION

This evaluation of the Connect Groups continues to demonstrate how important these peer support groups are for families facing childhood cancer. The service links clearly to **Emotional and Mental Wellbeing** with almost all participants stating Connect Groups helped them feel heard and understood. They also strongly represent an important opportunity for meaningful **Connection** with other families going through childhood cancer. Participants strongly rated facilitator input as helpful, indicating that the service has some capacity to **Empower** families to navigate the impacts of childhood cancer.

Feedback from participants around the quality of the program is strongly positive, particularly with regards to feeling comfortable within the group, with almost all participants stating they would recommend Connect Groups to others. Continued feedback gathered from participants in the future will help to monitor the extent to which the groups provide valuable support for families.



More information

For more information about this evaluation, please contact the Redkite Research, Evaluation and Innovation team by calling 1800 733 548 or re@redkite.org.au