



3Bridges Community

INCLUSIVE PRACTICES IN OSHC

A case study on an Outside of School Hours Care (OSHC) service in NSW
October 2021

3Bridges Community

3Bridges Community is a not-for-profit organisation that offers a range of services including 9 OSHC services located across Sydney.

The organisation has built a reputation for being community focused and having a positive attitude when it comes to accommodating individuals with disability and additional needs.

One of its largest OSHC services, based in Penshurst, has 10-15% of their children with diagnosed disabilities. 3Bridges shared its practices and strategies to access funding to improve inclusive practices.

Tap into Innovations Solutions funding

As part of Commonwealth Government's Inclusion Development Fund (IDF), the Innovations Solutions Support is available to assist eligible early childhood education and care services to fund innovative solutions to barriers to inclusion and implement inclusive practices.

This has provided great support and development on several initiatives implemented across 3Bridges OSHC services to upskill staff and benefit the team.

Behaviour therapists were on-boarded and paid visits to a few of the services. They spent time with educators and offered invaluable support and insight on working with children with additional needs.

The funding also went into other initiatives such as engaging music therapists, and implementing cultural projects in the community.

There may be challenges for services in relation to gaining familiarity with creating a business plan to access the funding however, the IDF team and the Inclusion Agency KU Children's Services can be directly contacted for assisting services to familiarise with the process and criteria, and to provide feedback on applications.

Practising and submitting applications several times has helped the service to gain confidence and skills in addressing the criteria.



Community Engagement

Over four decades, 3Bridges has established relationships with many families and networks within the community. Connection to other community services is advantageous when it comes to referral for families that need support with NDIS applications and accessing specialised services.

Being a part of a network reference group based in the St George and Sutherland areas allows the service to exchange ideas with entities outside of the organisation.

Tips to connect with the community:

- ✓ Gain understanding of available options of care and services in the community
- ✓ Collaborate with other community services
- ✓ Explore and consider opportunities to partner with community organisations to improve meeting the needs of children
- ✓ Participate in local network groups and discussions

3Bridges works with youth services to implement a mentoring program to support inclusive practices.

A youth worker and a group of young people visit the Penshurst West service weekly and children with additional needs have particularly enjoyed outdoor activities with them.

One experienced youth worker has worked extensively for 6-8 weeks with a child at the service who is on the autism spectrum. The youth worker guided staff through specific situations on working with the child's behaviour.

Twelve months later, the service saw how a little extra connection with the community can make a huge difference in a child. 3Bridges is now looking to expand this program to its other OSHC services.



Open and honest conversations

The service emphasises the importance of having an open and honest dialogue with the family prior to enrolling a child with additional needs.

At 3Bridges, the family and the child visit the service and have an initial meeting with the manager and the nominated supervisor. They discuss the needs of children and the available support that the service is able to offer as a non-specialised disability service. The conversation covers staffing arrangements, access to Inclusion Support funding, the physical environment and other available supports.



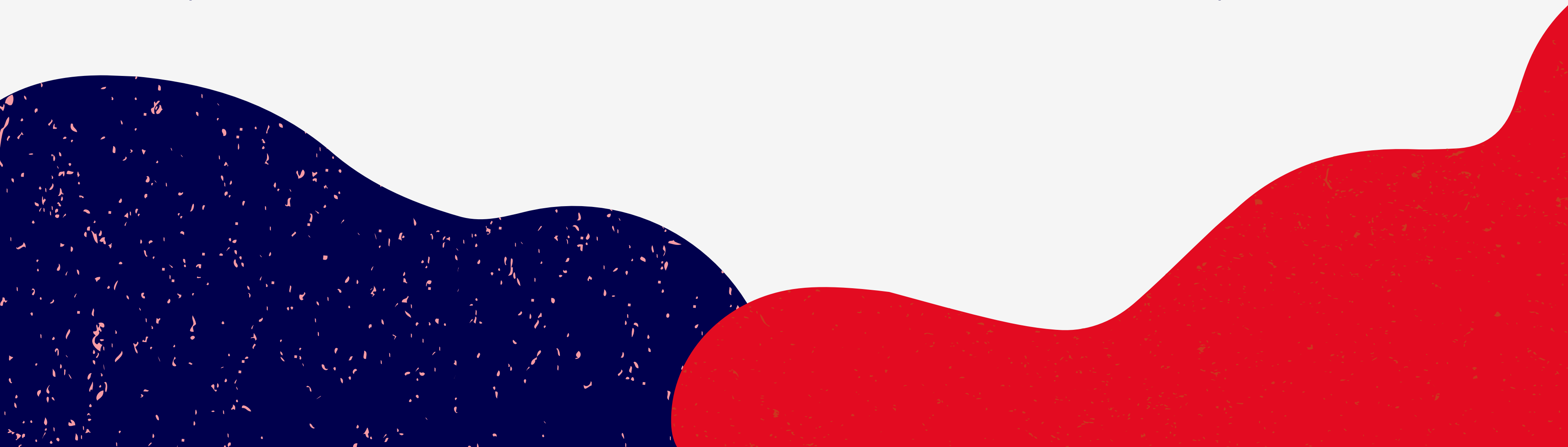
It is necessary for OSHC services to understand and communicate their strengths and limitations when it comes to providing quality care.

An open and honest conversation addresses expectations, and helps to assess whether the environment is suitable for the child.

A positive attitude

3Bridges has a positive attitude when it comes to engaging children with high support needs.

There may be times when the service may be initially considered unsuitable due to the child's high support requirements, however, the service offers the child a trial and often the environment turns out to be adequate.





Staff also display a similar attitude when it comes to being patient when they face challenges around working with a child with high support needs. To further support staff, debriefing sessions and mini workshops are held with their manager around responding to difficult situations.

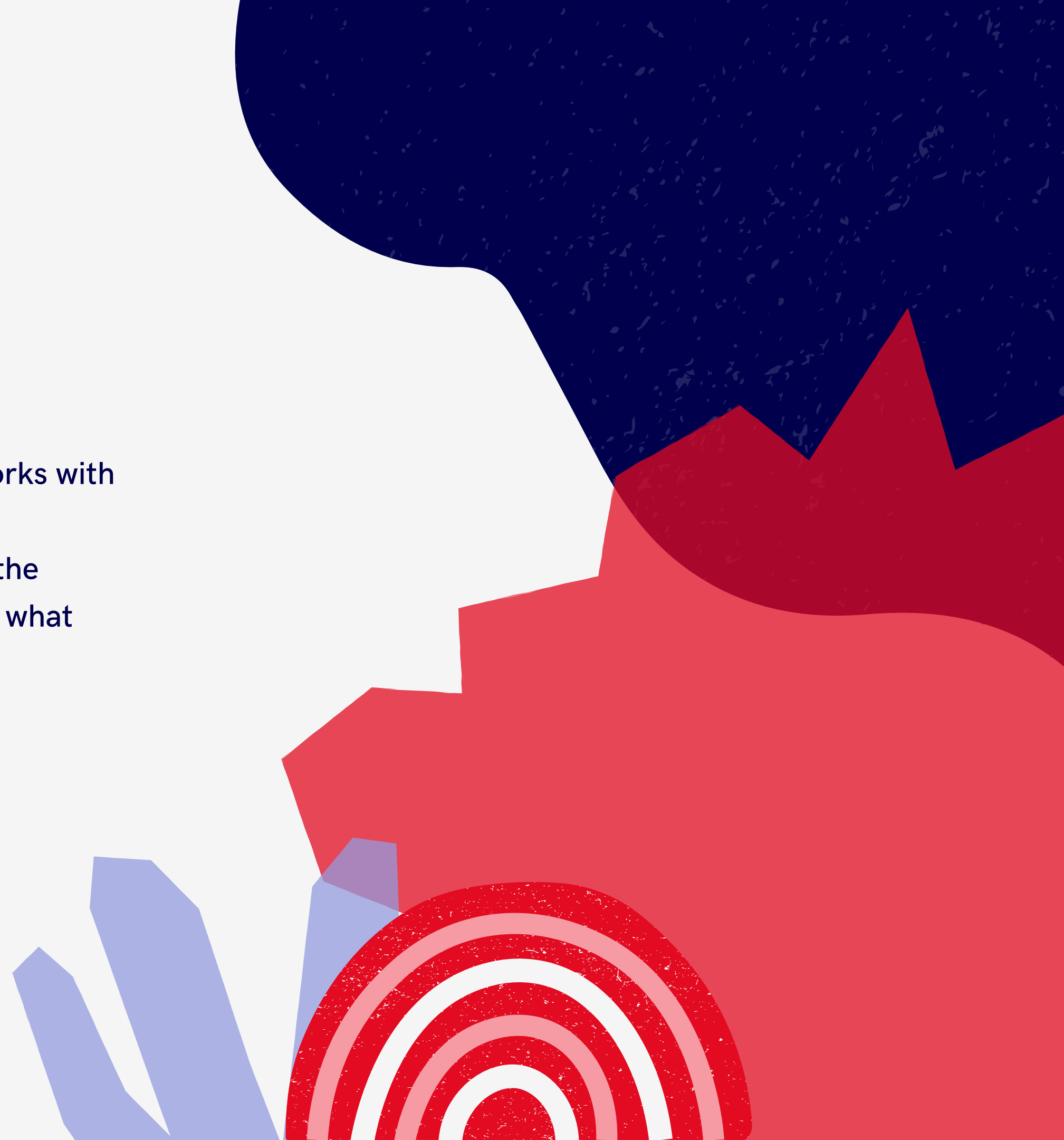
3Bridges has worked with Aspect, an autism-specific service provider on a training project which delivered numerous training sessions and resources.

Communicate with all parties

The service communicates closely with all parties that work directly with the child in order to best meet their needs. Regular check ins with the school and teachers help to inform adjustments to programming within the service.

When the service drops off a child who might have had a difficult morning, the educator will advise the school office or the teachers of the situation. When the child leaves the school, teachers would also update the service's nominated supervisor about the events that occurred during the day, if relevant.

There is also close communication with the team that works with children who attend a school for specific purposes. The communication may involve the occupational therapist, the speech pathologist and the classroom teacher to discuss what they have been working on with the child.



Useful resources

Contact [3Bridges OSHC](#) if you would like further details or support on inclusive practices

[KU Children's Services: What is Innovations Solutions Support?](#)

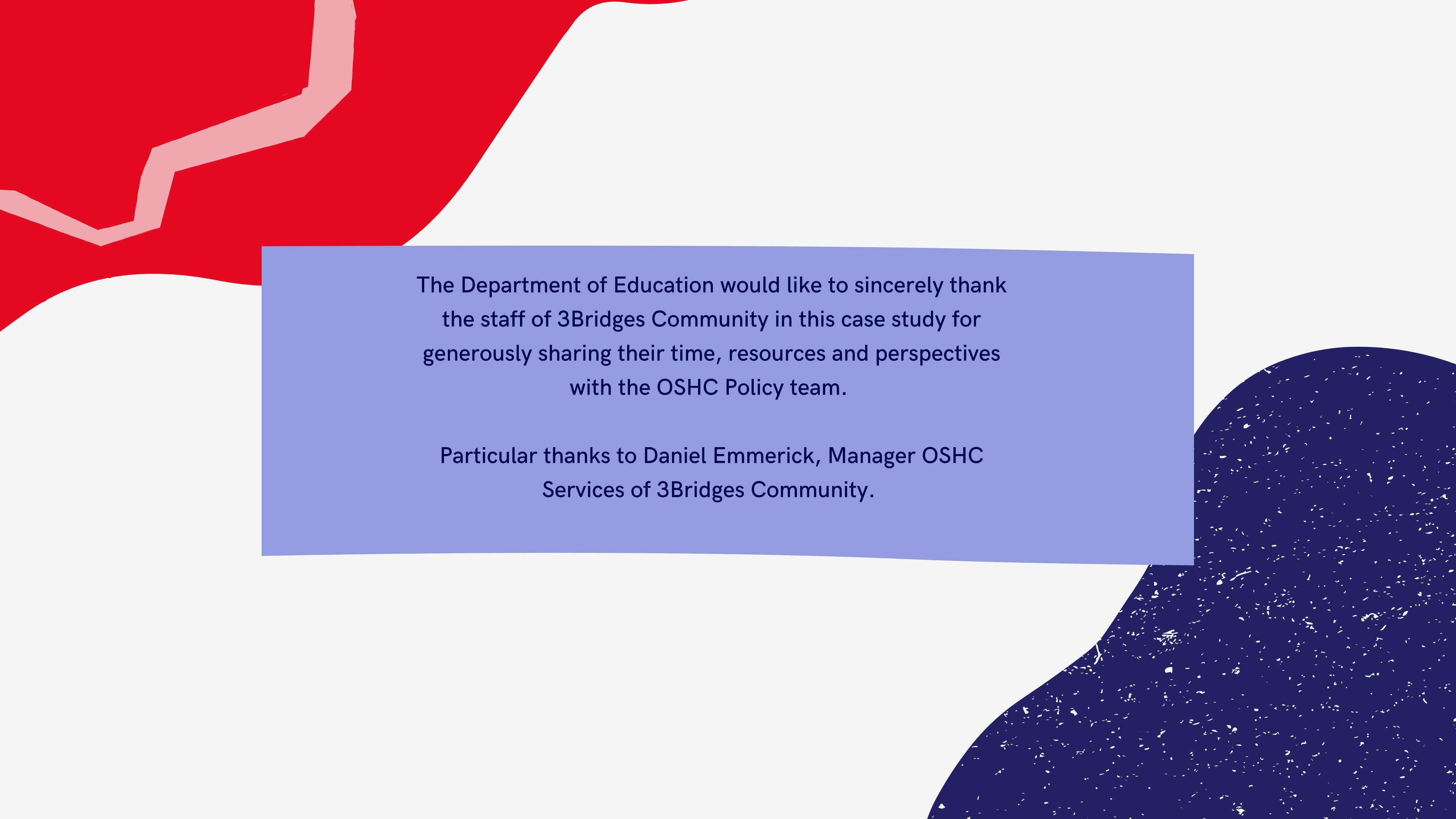
[Innovative Solutions Support Factsheet](#)

[KU Children's Services: Applying for Innovative Solutions](#)

[IDF Innovative Solutions Support FAQ](#)

[Aspect Australia](#)





The Department of Education would like to sincerely thank the staff of 3Bridges Community in this case study for generously sharing their time, resources and perspectives with the OSHC Policy team.

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