

# **CREATING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS THROUGH SUPPORT GROUPS**

**During the time when a child's challenges first present—whether it's at birth, as a toddler, or during the school years—parents often find themselves feeling not only confused but alone. It can seem like a whirlwind of events where they meet many professionals, go through many intervention processes, attend multiple meetings regarding their child however they may not have a time or a place to process their emotions.**

**Parents may not know anyone who's experienced similar challenges in their family, and it may feel too painful or pointless to share the details of what you're going through with family and friends.**

**This is where building your own community can become key. By finding other parents who are facing or have faced similar issues, many parents feel better able to navigate the path they never envisioned.**

**Parent groups are a way for parents to create their own community where members support each other through the journey of having a child with special needs.**

**Some ways in which Parent Groups help can be as follow-**

## **Help become a place to share triumphs or disappointments-**

Sometimes the smallest achievement can be the biggest triumph or what seems like a small road bump in progress maybe very disappointing to you. It's always great to have a place where you can unpack these emotions and have the support from the community.

## **Help you appreciate and understand your child's needs and strengths-**

Sometimes when discussion progresses and having it reflected by others can help parents understand their child better. It's always good to have people who have helped give you perspective.

**Thomson Paediatric Centre will be running Parent Groups in 2018. Should you be interested in receiving some more information on the groups please contact – Manjula [manjula.gunawardena@thomsonpaeds.com](mailto:manjula.gunawardena@thomsonpaeds.com) OR Eliza [eliza.leong@thomsonpaeds.com](mailto:eliza.leong@thomsonpaeds.com)**

## **Help to find resources and information-**

Community groups lead by professionals can be a great space to share successful strategies and resources. It is also a great place to have your questions addressed and to allow discussion into topics which may not be addressed in other places.

## **Help be a place where deep friendships are formed-**

Parent groups often foster connections amongst people which last beyond the tenure of the groups themselves. By learning to hold space for yourself and other friendships are often created. Parents start to create their own community and connections.

## **Help create a safe place to share emotions-**

The road to supporting a child with special needs can be emotionally taxing on parents. Having a space which is safe and allowing yourself the time to discuss these emotions and focus in on feelings can help. Especially when others maybe having similar feelings.

## **Help find people with shared experiences-**

It is not always easy to share an experience when you know the other person is unable to relate to you. A community where people have been or are going through similar experience relieves some of the loneliness parents often report.

