The results of a scoping project in 2012 revealed that the availability of paediatric allied health services in Gippsland was significantly lower than other regional areas of Victoria.

The scoping report concluded that paediatric allied health services in Gippsland were inadequate and that serious consideration needed to be given to redirecting community health funds to develop paediatric allied health services.

The scoping report also recommended a collaborative, multiple stakeholder approach for developing a referral pathway for paediatric allied health services in the region.

What they did

Latrobe Community Health Service joined the Central West Gippsland Paediatric Group, an alliance of 10 partnering organisations that agreed to work collaboratively to develop paediatric allied health services in the local area.

The Central West Gippsland Pediatric Group set themselves three key objectives:

- increase community access to paediatric allied health services provided through community health funded programs, at a level consistent with other regions of rural Victoria
- develop and support a sub-regional collaborative model
- develop a referral pathway and a decision making database for referrals.

The Central West Gippsland Pediatric Group worked together to assist partner agencies to develop new paediatric allied health services in the region.

Acting on the information provided in the scoping study, Latrobe Community Health Service re-directed some of their core community health funds to address the gap in paediatric allied health services.

The group took a regional approach to the planning and delivery of services, and to support this they developed:

- a regional referral pathway for paediatric allied health services
- a regional collaborative paediatric allied health clinical support model (which included representatives from acute, public, private, not-for-profit, education and academic sectors) to develop a support/mentoring expertise register, service directory and secondary consult services
- a database for service identification and referrals
- a training program for local health professionals to use the database
- a marketing plan to promote the paediatric allied health services, referral pathways and database.

Background

Integrated healthcare for people with a chronic condition can be supported by working with other service providers.
The group also hosts networking events to improve the working relationships of health professionals working with children, increase the awareness of services provided in paediatrics, and to build skills in specialist areas of paediatrics.

**Outcomes**

Residents of Latrobe now have access to multidisciplinary paediatric allied health services that were previously not available through community health.

Family and other service providers in the region have access to a clear and concise documentation outlining referral pathways for paediatric allied health services.

As a result of the additional allied health services in the region, existing services such as the Early Childhood Intervention Services have experienced reductions in waiting time.

Paediatric allied health clinicians feel they are better supported (through new networking opportunities) and have access to more professional development opportunities than previously available.

The development of referral pathways allows for integrated service coordination across the catchment. The pathway also promotes the use of the Better Health Channel to educate and empower parents to take an active role in their child’s health and development.