



## Our vision for change

Improving child wellbeing and school readiness for our children and learning what it takes to create change for all Western Australian children.



**EARLY YEARS  
PARTNERSHIP**  
Central Great Southern

# Children Growing Strong

Early Years Community Plan

2023



[earlyyearspartnership.org.au](http://earlyyearspartnership.org.au)

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## Why we need change

In Central Great Southern more than **1 in 4**



children are considered developmentally vulnerable.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Commonwealth of Australia and Department of Education, Western Australia, 2019. Early childhood development for children living in Western Australia by region: Australian Early Development Census 2018. Accessible via <https://www.education.wa.edu.au/dl/vnm73>

## How we will create change

Five key priorities have been identified locally to improve the wellbeing and school readiness of children living in Central Great Southern:



### Child Health

To improve the health of babies and children including reducing the number of preventable hospitalisations of children due to dental conditions, and to increase the proportion of children entering school who meet the developmental physical domain (AEDC).



### Child Development

To increase the number of children meeting developmental milestones and entering school developmentally ready.



### Financial Wellbeing

To increase the number of families with children aged 0–4 years who have a stable home and regular, nutritious meals.



### Family Safety

To reduce the number of children aged 0–4 years who have interactions with family violence.



### Maternal Health

To improve access to and attendance at antenatal services to ensure mothers are healthy and babies have the best possible start to life.



## Who will be involved

The Central Great Southern community, State Government, the Minderoo Foundation and Telethon Kids Institute (TKI) as evidence and evaluation partner, are working in partnership to create change. The Western Australian Government participates via the Department of Communities (lead partner), Department of Education and the Department of Health.

## What we will do to create change

The detailed Children Growing Strong – early years plan that outlines action for change can be found at [earlyyearspartnership.org.au](https://earlyyearspartnership.org.au)





## Child Health

**Aims:** To improve the health of babies and children including reducing the number of preventable hospitalisations of children due to dental conditions, and to increase the proportion of children entering school who meet the developmental physical domain (AEDC).

### 1. Access to dental services

#### Local level action

- Implement the Dental Project which will include:
  - Dental health screening using photo identification prior to triaging by the University of Western Australia (UWA) dental team.
  - Local dental services for five days, three times per year to treat minor dental issues.<sup>2</sup>
  - Increase awareness of, and promote access to, the Commonwealth Government's Child Dental Benefits Scheme.

#### Systems level action

- Ensure the project evaluation is provided to the Office of the Chief Dental Officer to inform the development and implementation of the State Government's commitment to provide free dental assessments to Western Australian children aged between 6-months and 5 years old.
- To align all dental work with food security work to improve long term oral health.

### 2. Prevention

#### Local level action

- **Health Promotion:** The Dental Project Coordinator will work with local community connectors and champions to build relationships and engage with local families, to address the underlying issues and causes of poor oral health including knowledge and understanding regarding healthy diets, barriers to healthy eating such as access to food and poor cooking skills.
- **Distribution of health promotion resources:** Promote dental health and oral hygiene through the distribution of localised health promotion resources (funded by the Communities for Children Facilitating Partner program, Amity Health), including tailoring existing resources to meet local cultural needs.
- Continue to work with Edith Cowan University on its project to assess and improve parent/carer's dental health literacy and knowledge including promoting good dental hygiene practices such as toothbrushing and the importance of not sharing toothbrushes.

### 3. Knowledge of the effects of poor oral health on the child

#### Local level action

- Support attendance at child health checks as child health nurses practice 'lift the lip' assessments which leads to children's dental issues being identified and referred earlier.
- Promote dental health and oral hygiene through the distribution of localised health promotion resources.



## Child Development

**Aim:** To increase the number of children meeting developmental milestones and entering school developmentally ready.

### 1. Health checks and parental knowledge

#### Local level action

- Increase attendance at universal child health checks (with a focus on 2 years health checks).
- Increase parent knowledge of availability and access to additional community child health services to meet the family's needs.
- Improve transport infrastructure for parents to attend child health checks (bus).

#### Systems level action

- Explore international recommendations in relation to best practice for the ages at which scheduled child health checks should be administered, then if justified, the working party to advocate to Department of Health to trial additional child health checks to be added. Noting current attendance is low and therefore the first priority is to increase attendance at existing checks.
- Explore different models of child health nurse service delivery, e.g. virtual.

### 2. Engagement with early learning

#### Local level action

- Improved transport infrastructure for parents (as noted above) to increase engagement with early learning.
- Support local government authorities to work with early childhood service providers in developing grant applications for the Attraction and Retention Packages for Regional Child Care Workers Program.

#### Systems level action

- Support the co-location of early years services at the planned Katanning Hub, once the building is complete.
- Support advocacy by parents and community members for better pay and conditions for early childhood educators to assist in attracting and retaining staff, through adding their voice and experiences to current national campaigning on this issue.

### 3. Family/kin relationships

- Action to be developed.

### 4. Cultural considerations

- Action to be developed.

### 5. Service delivery

#### Local level action

- To re-establish an Early Years Network in the region.



## Financial Wellbeing

**Aim:** To increase the number of families with children (aged 0–4 years) who have a stable home and regular, nutritious meals.

### 1. Food security

#### Local level action

- To engage with families to understand the extent of food insecurity and explore the underlying causes of food insecurity in Central Great Southern.
- To address issues of access to emergency food relief to ensure such access is provided in a dignified and culturally appropriate manner.
- To explore existing evidence of successful food security projects and engage with them.
- To co-design a food security project with the community to ensure people have access to healthy food.
- WACHS to lead the delivery of the Food Sensations program in playgroups, antenatal groups etc across the Central Great Southern.

#### Systems level action

- To explore current Western Australia systems of access to emergency food relief to ensure dignity is prioritised in access to these services.

### 2. Employment and training

#### Local level action

- Promote Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) as a career option.
- Seek accessible training opportunities for CaLD families, to increase access to adequately paid employment.

#### Systems level action

- Explore and support opportunities for more local training options in ECEC sector.

### 3. Financial stress

#### Local level action

- Seek resourcing for additional financial counsellors and/or support services in the Central Great Southern.

### 4. Stable and affordable housing

#### Systems level action

- Explore innovative social and affordable housing models that could be adopted in the regional context and seek resourcing for additional social and affordable housing in the region.



# Central Great Southern Priorities



## Family Safety

**Aim:** To reduce the number of children (aged 0–4 years) who have interactions with family violence.

### 1. Service providers and first responder skills and knowledge specifically related to cultural competency to ensure a culturally appropriate response to family violence

#### Local level action

- To engage local cultural organisations (as far as possible) to deliver cultural competency training to all FDV service providers and first responders working in Central Great Southern.
- Provide mental health first aid training.
- Create awareness of lateral violence.
- Promote Safe and Together training for local service providers.

#### Systems level action

- Compulsory FDV awareness training as part of first aid / Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) refresher courses for first responders.

### 2. Cultural safety

#### Local level action

- To engage local organisations (as far as possible) to deliver cultural sensitivity training.

### 3. Contributing factors and drivers of FDV

#### Local level action

- WACHS to train health professionals, and other cultural support workers, in the Baby Makes 3 program.

#### Systems level action

- Department of Communities to release FDV data to Shire Council.

### 4. Service availability and access

#### Local level action

- Establish a community reference group with the aim of strengthening co-ordination and collaboration between all agencies providing family violence services to Central Great Southern.
- This reference group will work with the Central Great Southern Family and Domestic Violence (CGSFDV) Action Group to build awareness of the impact of high rates of family violence in the local community.

### 5. Family and kin connections

#### Local level action

- Services to recognise the existence of diverse family structures and work inclusively with all models of family structures.
- Build capacity and provide support for fathers and male caregivers in positive parenting practices.

### 6. Availability of refuge accommodation with appropriate resourcing

#### Systems level action

- To source funding for appropriate refuge accommodation for women and children escaping family violence based on demonstrated need.

### 7. Behaviour change programs for those who commit acts of family violence

#### Systems level action

- To explore preferred models of behaviour change for those who commit acts of family violence.
- To source funding for the preferred model of behaviour change for those who commit acts of family violence.



## Maternal Health

**Aim:** To improve access to and attendance at antenatal services to ensure mothers are healthy and babies have the best possible start to life.

### 1. Birthing on-country

#### Local level action

- Work with, and encourage relationships between, South West Aboriginal Medical Service (SWAMS), WACHS antenatal team and Aboriginal women to ensure they feel more connected to country when giving birth.

#### Systems level action

- Work with Western Australia Country Health Service (WACHS) to investigate options for all women in the Central Great Southern to give birth closer to home.

### 2. Parent-child health

#### Local level action

- Create a safe space (health hub) for mothers to access culturally sensitive health checks and advice.
- Culturally appropriate pre-natal and post-natal education and support services (safe, accessible, face-to-face education and support / counselling services). Education workshops could also include information on FASD, blood born viruses, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and safe sex.

### 3. Maternal stress and trauma

#### Local level action

- Support the Volunteer Family Connect worker commencing at Wanslea in February 2023 by referring new mothers as appropriate.

#### Systems level action

- Work with WACHS to identify relevant evidence-based initiatives that aim to reduce the stress and trauma experienced by women during the defined maternal period.

<sup>2</sup> Initially there may be a higher percentage of children presenting with acute needs, however it is expected that this will reduce over time with the effectiveness of health promotion and early detection.