



Families and Communities Program.
Communities for Children Facilitating
Partner. Community Strategic Plan.

Shellharbour Communities for Children Community Strategic Plan: 2022-2026 Priority Areas in Focus



Barnardos
Australia

Because **every child**
needs a champion

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Strategic Executive Summary

Shellharbour Communities for Children Consultative Committee proudly presents the Strategic Plan for 2022-2026. This Strategic Plan is the culmination of extensive community consultation, research, data analysis and collaborative discussion with stakeholders. This plan sets the framework, direction and priorities for Shellharbour Communities for Children for the next 4 years.

The Shellharbour Communities for Children Consultative Committee comprises 15 members who represent a wide diversity of agencies and community interests across the Shellharbour Local Government Area. Most of the committee members live or work in Shellharbour and are all committed to providing the best opportunities and environments for the children of Shellharbour to thrive.

Shellharbour is undoubtedly a physically beautiful place to live. Community members are proud of the local environment, sense of community, and availability of resources and facilities such as parks, bike tracks, beaches, the lake and greenspaces. However, the community is also aware of challenges and complexities that impact the physical, social and emotional development; educational opportunities; and the health and wellbeing of children, young people and families in the area. Shellharbour Communities for Children will seek to improve outcomes by funding strategies, initiatives and programs based on recommendations informed by recent community consultation and is evidenced-based. These will build community capacity and will support children, young people and families in the Shellharbour area to learn, grow and develop to their full potential.

The focus of the Strategic Plan will be on mentoring, transitions, health and wellbeing, community places and spaces, and parallel programs. These will build on the strengths within community – the people, connections, culture, and knowledge.

Shellharbour Communities for Children-funded Community Partners will demonstrate high quality practice and pedagogy that embraces culture, collaboration and innovation. Programs facilitated will be evidence-based, and informed by current research, expertise and experience from within community. Importantly, the focus will be on the provision of programs and initiatives that are sustainable, and empower and build the capacity of children, young people and families in the Shellharbour community.

Glossary of Terms

CfC	Communities for Children
CP	Community Partners
DEX	Data Exchange
DSS	Department of Social Services
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
FAC	Family and Children Activity
FP	Facilitating Partners
SCORE	Standard Client/Community Outcomes Reporting

Background

Introduction

This document outlines the Strategic Plan of the Shellharbour Communities for Children initiative for the next 4 years. It builds on the previous Shellharbour Communities for Children Strategic Plan and includes information about Shellharbour Communities for Children main priorities for the period 2022 -2026.

The Strategic Plan has been developed with support of the Shellharbour Communities for Children Consultative Committee and informed by The State of Shellharbour's Children Report 2019 and the Building Stronger Communities: Our Community, Our Place Community Consultation Report (2021). The Plan adopts a strengths-based approach, focusing on identified strengths, issues, priorities and opportunities shared by the Shellharbour community. Importantly, it draws on current research and evidence about the approaches that best support children and their families.

Purpose

This document is intended to provide guidance and assistance to the community to ensure children, young people, families and community thrive. The core aims of this Strategic Plan are:

- Build and extend upon the previous Communities for Children Shellharbour Strategic Plan (2015-2019)
- Guide the work of Communities for Children Shellharbour, its decision-making and focus areas for the period 2022-2026
- Provide clear information to community about how Communities for Children Shellharbour intends to work
- Provide effective guidance to the Community Partners and potential Community Partners about Communities for Children Shellharbour and Priority areas
- Act as a roadmap toward the future and be revisited for the purposes of guidance and evaluation
- Be nested amongst a suite of resources. These resources provide an awareness of the Shellharbour community, empower a strong community voice, and a comprehensive overview of the underlying principles, approaches and intentions of Communities for Children Shellharbour. These resources include:
 - Barnardos Practice Framework Principles (Barnardos, 2021)
 - Building Stronger Communities Shellharbour: Our Community, Our Place (CfC, 2021b)
 - Draft Outcomes Framework for the Families and Children Activity (CfC, 2021a)
 - Families and Communities Program. Families and Children Guidelines Overview (DSS, 2017), and
 - Guide Book for Communities for Children Facilitating Partners Evidence-based programme profiles (AIFS, 2021)
 - The State of Shellharbour's Children Report 2019 (CfC, 2019)
 - The First 2000 Days Framework (NSW Health, 2019).

Overview of Communities for Children

Communities for Children (CfC) aim to deliver positive and sustainable outcomes for children and families in disadvantaged communities throughout Australia. CfC are place-based and develop and facilitate a whole of community approach to support and enhance early childhood development and wellbeing for children aged 0-12 years but may include children up to age 18 years. CfCs build on local strengths to meet local community needs and create capability within local service systems, using a strong evidence-base for early intervention and prevention.

CfC collaborate with organisations to provide a holistic service system for children, young people and families. CfC Facilitating Partners fund organisations (known as Community Partners) to provide services including parenting support, peer support, and other supports to promote child health and wellbeing. There is a commitment to evidence-based practice and active support for the provision of services that will improve outcomes for children and families.

The CfC activity targets vulnerable children and families in disadvantaged communities, with a focus on providing early intervention and prevention services for children at risk of poor outcomes or at risk of abuse and neglect. Priority should be given to:

- families with children at risk of abuse or neglect,
- families experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability, and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, in line with the Australian Government's commitment to Closing the Gap.

Services may also be targeted towards a specific group of vulnerable and disadvantaged children and families who are at risk of poor outcomes. These groups could include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, parents/carers supporting children (including children with disability or chronic medical condition) with additional needs, families who lack social supports, and families experiencing mental illness, alcohol and other drug or domestic violence issues. Services have a primary focus on children aged 0-12 years but may include children up to age 18 years.

[Reference: Families and Communities Program. Families and Children Guidelines Overview (DSS, 2017)]

Communities for Children Shellharbour. Reports.

The following reports will be used as a point of reference throughout the Strategic Plan.

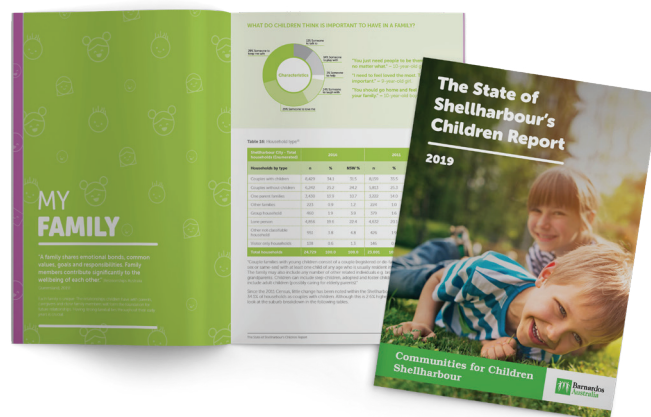
The State of Shellharbour's Children Report 2019

The objective of The State of the Shellharbour's Children Report 2019 was to bring together local data, current research and the child's voice to gain perspective on what life is like for children living in Shellharbour (CfC, 2019). The report was presented in a way that encouraged readers to empathise with children through the inclusion of the Child's Voice.

Bronfenbrenner's Social Ecological Theory (Kearns, 2017) was used to frame the collection of information and reporting of the findings. Applying this framework placed the child at the centre of the research, recognising that child learning and development is influenced by multiple factors. The importance of providing children with a positive home, learning and wider community environment was recognised, and informed the report domains: My Community, My Wellbeing, My Family, My Learning, and My Home, representing five key influences on each child's learning and development (CfC, 2019).

The State of Shellharbour's Children Report 2019 encouraged readers to understand:

- What life is like for children living in Shellharbour
- What is important to children
- What experiences are impacting children today



Building Stronger Communities Shellharbour: Our Community, Our Place (2021)

The purpose of this report by CfC Shellharbour was to present findings from community consultation. Through widespread consultation with children, young people, families and community in the Shellharbour area, the thoughts and ideas of community members were heard, and strengths, areas of interest and potential opportunities for service delivery and development identified. By consulting widely with the Shellharbour community, those working with children, young people and families are informed and better able to provide responsive, targeted and effective programs for children 0-18 years.



The consultation was based on The State of Shellharbour's Children Report 2019 (CfC, 2019) and provides a strong foundation for local Strategic Planning. Applying a strengths-based approach guided by the Harwood Method of Community Engagement (The Harwood Institute, 2019), the consultation was facilitated with an overarching focus on exploring protective and risk factors, and guided by the following questions:

- What are the strengths of the community?
- What is important for community members?
- What are the main issues impacting children, young people and families?
- How can a sense of safety and belonging be created?
- What additional support and programs are needed?

Communities for Children Shellharbour. Practice and Theoretical Principles

Communities for Children Objectives

To improve the health and well-being of families and the development of young children, from conception through to age 18 years, paying special attention to:

- Healthy young families — supporting parents to care for their children before and after birth and throughout the early years
- Supporting families and parents — support for parents to provide children with secure attachment, consistent discipline and quality environments that are stable, positive, stimulating, safe and secure
- Early learning — provide access to high quality early learning opportunities in the years before school; provide early identification and support for children at risk of developmental and behavioural problems; assist parents with ways they can stimulate and promote child development and learning from birth
- School transition and engagement – support children and families to make a smooth transition to school and work with local schools to assist children and families with their ongoing engagement with school.

To create strong child-friendly communities that understand the importance of children and apply this capacity to maximise the health, well-being and early development of young children at the local level.

(CfC, 2021a; DSS, 2017)

Barnardos Practice Framework and Principles

The Barnardos Practice Framework and Principles (Barnardos, 2021b) outlines the organisation's approach to achieving the intended outcomes for children, young people and their families and creates a shared approach that collectively brings the vision, purpose and values of the organisation to life. The seven Practice Principles are:

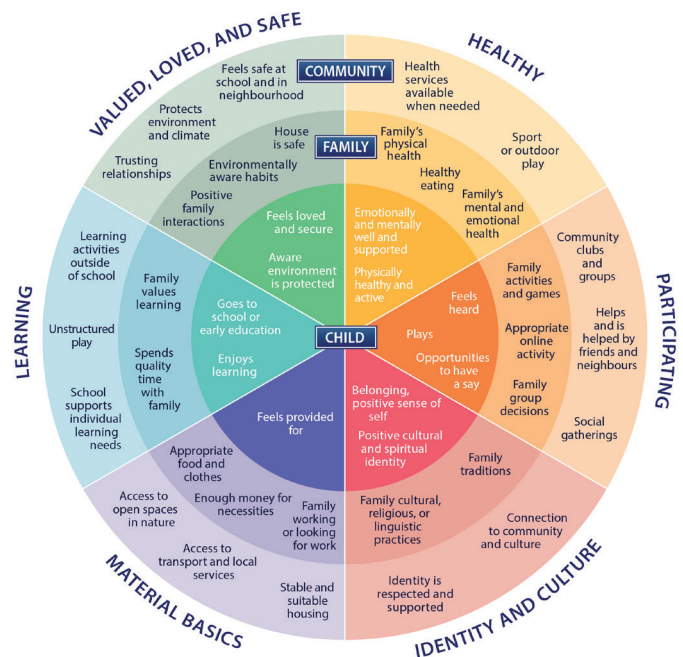
- Be child focused
- Keep families central
- Build strong relationships and connections
- Approach culture with respect, humility and curiosity
- Build capacity
- Help clients heal from the effects of trauma
- Be evidence-driven



The Nest (ARACY)

Barnardos supports the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) Nest evidence-based approach for child and youth wellbeing. The Nest is Australia's first evidence-based wellbeing framework for children and young people (Goodhue et. al., 2021). The Nest provides evidence that for children to have high wellbeing, they must be doing well in six interlocking dimensions:

- Being loved and safe
- Having material basics
- Being healthy
- Learning
- Participating
- Having a positive sense of culture and identity



Shellharbour. An Overview



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Shellharbour Local Government Area (LGA) continues to be a growing area within the Illawarra. Based on the 2016 census, in 2021 Shellharbour had an Estimated Resident Population (ERP) of 75,953 and is forecast to grow by approximately 25% to 94,877 by 2041 (ABS, 2020; Shellharbour City Council, 2021). Located approximately 100km south of Sydney, Shellharbour can provide families with a more affordable living option whilst working within the Wollongong or Sydney CBD areas. Shellharbour includes the suburbs and rural localities of Albion Park, Albion Park Rail, Barrack Heights, Barrack Point, Blackbutt, Calderwood, Croom, Dunmore, Flinders, Lake Illawarra, Macquarie Pass, Mount Warrigal, North Macquarie, Oak Flats, Shell Cove, Shellharbour, Shellharbour City Centre, Tongarra, Tullimbar, Warilla and Yellow Rock.

All data within this report describes the Shellharbour LGA, unless stated otherwise.

As reported in the State of Shellharbour's Children Report 2019 (CfC, 2019), there were areas in which the Shellharbour Community were doing well:

- According to the 2019 release of Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data, it was evident that Shellharbour had made improvements in all domains. Additionally, Shellharbour had higher rates of achievement in three of the five domains when compared to the NSW benchmark.
- Immunisation rates continue to be an area of great strength for Shellharbour. When compared to NSW, Shellharbour has higher rates of immunisation in all three age ranges. Additionally, there has been a significant increase in the 5 years age group with 97.9% of children being up to date with their schedule.
- Overall, there has been a slight shift upwards in the 2018 NAPLAN results.

However, there were areas for improvement identified:

- SEIFA scores across areas within Shellharbour are deeply concerning. The level of disadvantage identified in Albion Park Rail-Croom, Barrack Heights, Blackbutt, Lake Illawarra, Mount Warrigal, Oak Flats and Warilla are areas that require continued focus. (Refer to State of Shellharbour's Children Report, 2019, p47).
- Schools within the most disadvantaged areas continue to receive NAPLAN results that are substantially below the Australian average.
- Shellharbour has higher rates of children falling victim to sexual offences.

Section 1. Community Needs Assessment

[Reference: The State of Shellharbour's Children 2019 (CfC, 2019) & Building Stronger Communities Shellharbour: Our Community, Our Place (CfC, 2021b)].

Background

The CfC Shellharbour Community Consultation (CfC, 2021b) was facilitated to gather the voice of the community. The process involved a range of consultations - Individual, Small Group, Focus Groups and Surveys. This consultation design was able to capture a diverse perspective from many community representatives. The range of consultation methods enabled participants to contribute in a way that was appropriate for them and was responsive to each individual and group. Involvement in group consultations provided participants with an opportunity to hear the perspectives of others and engage in collaborative discussion. The consultation process was guided by the CfC Consultative Committee and current Community Partners.

The consultations provided rich information. In total, over 235 community members, ranging from 3-70 years of age participated in the discussions. The willingness of community to participate was testament to the sense of commitment that was articulated throughout discussions.

Key needs within the community

The process of Community Consultation (2021), identified key strengths, issues, priorities and opportunities within the Shellharbour area. These were shared by community members, collated, and an overview is presented in the tables below.

Community Strengths

Identified themes	Key ideas
Physical environment and facilities	Natural environment – parks, beaches Recreation – pools, bike tracks Library
Collaboration	Willingness to work together Partnerships between education and community Sharing knowledge Innovation and flexibility Holistic approach to child and family wellbeing
Advocacy	For children, young people, families and community Sense of responsibility
Key People	Women Educators Community leaders Expertise and commitment
The Community	Pride in the community Trust, empathy, commitment Diversity and culture Resilience
Connections	Community events Cultural connections

Community Issues

Identified themes	Key ideas
Health and Wellbeing	Basic needs – Housing, food security Financial pressure Mental health Trauma Family and Domestic Violence Stress and burnout
Engagement	School engagement Parent engagement in programs Lack of trust
Isolation	Social disconnect Transport
Access to knowledge, services and support	Limited programs, support Waiting times Funding Access to information Transitions Knowledge of services
Goals and ambitions	Confidence and capacity Feeling empowered
Sense of belonging, identity and culture	Community perceptions and expectations Secure social situations Cultural disconnect Places to connect
Complexity and change	Consistency Complex family issues Change in society and community

Community Priorities

Identified themes	Key ideas
Identity, community and culture	Authenticity Pride and ownership Respect Holistic approach
Belonging and safety	Safety – cultural, physical, social and emotional Trust Spaces and places Acceptance Meet basic needs
Education and employment	First 2000 days (Early childhood) Early intervention Education – whole of community Responsive models
Engagement	Community Family Education Culture
Responsive and reflective practices	Being where people are Holistic approach Individualised and local support and programs
Relationships and connections	Family connections Attachments Cultural partnerships
Community knowledge and capacity	Celebrate achievements Strengths-based approach Empowering people Rights of the child Cultural awareness Awareness of support, services and programs

Community Issues

Identified themes	Key ideas
Education	Increase engagement Alternate pathways
Connection – place and space	Community hubs Specific and individualised programs
Collective and responsive approach	Allied health services All levels approach Skills for life Sustainable practices Play
Mentors, role models and champions	Goals and aspirations Everyday mentors Conversations
Community voice	Valuing people Collaboration

Key Outcomes. The outcomes we are aiming to achieve, in the CfC Shellharbour service area, are access, knowledge and engagement. These are in response to recent community consultation, as well as concerning low SEIFA and NAPLAN scores.

Low SEIFA scores indicate high levels of disadvantage within the Shellharbour service area, with particularly high levels of disadvantage identified in the specific areas in the table below.

Albion Park Rail-Croom	(SEIFA score 940.7 / 19th percentile)
Barrack Heights	(SEIFA score 918.2 / 13th percentile)
Blackbutt	(SEIFA score 983.8 / 36th percentile)
Lake Illawarra	(SEIFA score 865.2 / 6th percentile)
Mount Warrigal	(SEIFA score 938.9 / 18th percentile)
Oak Flats	(SEIFA score 979.6 / 34th percentile)
Shellharbour City	(SEIFA score 976.0 / 32nd percentile)
Warilla	(SEIFA score 857.3 / 6th percentile)

(Refer to State of Shellharbour's Children Report, 2019, p47).

Schools in these disadvantaged areas continue to receive NAPLAN results that are substantially below the Australian average. Uplift in access to services, knowledge of services and engagement with services has the potential to positively influence change in these key issues.

Key Needs. Key needs, identified in the recent community consultation and coupled with extensive knowledge of the area, are support for the health and wellbeing of community members, with specific attention on mental health, food security and housing. Increasing the capacity of community members is also a priority, alongside the provision of interim support that will alleviate ongoing concerns for health and wellbeing imposed by extensive waiting lists. Services are currently working collaboratively, through CfC, to develop programs and support systems that best support current needs of children and families, including engaging in working groups and meetings. Services are encouraged to reflect on current and future practices to ensure a meaningful and responsive approach.

Emerging Needs. Children and families are facing increasing complexity and change within their community. This is due to COVID, as well as increasing financial, health and social pressures that families are exposed to. An active response to these emerging needs includes consistency in service provision, a sense of community, empowerment and increased engagement in services and programs. As it is apparent that there are many strengths within the Shellharbour community, these need to be embraced to allow children and families to thrive.

Strengths, Assets and Opportunities. Recent community consultation identified key areas of strength and opportunity. These include:

- the physical location of the area
- the sense of collaboration, pride, and commitment of community members
- authentic leadership within community, including the value of leadership of women

Building on these foundations and establishing support systems from within community will provide a sense of empowerment, ownership, and community connection, that will facilitate change.

Issues, Risks, Protective Factors. It is evident from local data, as well as community consultation that education is key. Education provides an opportunity for growth and community contribution; however, a lack of engagement presents a real risk. The provision of, and engagement in education,

in various forms that is culturally appropriate and responsive to individual needs is crucial, and will afford growth and development. Including holistic programs, such as families working together in programs is beneficial, creating an understanding and shared responsibility and capacity building. The provision of community hubs where children and families can connect and develop a sense of belonging has the potential to become a protective factor for children, young people, and families.

Current service and service gaps

The Community Consultation (CfC, 2021b) provided a rich and deep exploration, knowledge and understanding about the Shellharbour community – the strengths, issues, priorities, and opportunities - which led to recommendations for future practice.

Identified gaps. Several gaps in existing service provision have been identified in response to current local data. Engagement in services was identified, with a decrease in engagement with young children and families. Engagement that is consistent and sustainable is paramount, and will build capacity as well as empowerment and belonging.

It is evident that waiting lists for health and support services are extensive, and of concern. Long wait times have the potential to impact outcomes, as well as the motivation and persistence to seek much needed support and early intervention.

Programs offered across the community vary, and it has been identified that although the period of early childhood remains a priority for early intervention and access to quality education and support, there is a growing area of need, which is the 8-15 years age group, and particularly young females. This is an important period of transition, and targeted support is required to ensure continuity in support and engagement in positive experiences.

Addressing the gaps. Community consultation provided insight into the expectations and potential opportunities for addressing gaps in the service system. Establishing community hubs, where children and families can feel connected, a sense of belonging, valued, build capacity and receive support was highlighted as a key focus. Ideally, these hubs will be created in locations 'where the people are' and create a feeling of physical, emotional and social safety and security. Utilising current Neighbourhood and Community Centres was suggested.

Increasing community knowledge of services available is critical for children and families to understand where to seek support and how to engage with programs as required. Developing a central repository of key information, such as service type, location and contact details, will support and enable accessibility provided it is user-friendly and utilises preferred technology platforms. Key people in community also have the potential to provide this service and can act as a referral point to guide families in a timely and individualised way. A central repository will also empower families to make decisions and seek support based on their family's current needs.

Establishing mentor programs was identified as an important community-informed support strategy. Mentor programs afford multiple levels of benefit, for both the mentee, as well as the mentor. Connecting children, young people and families with a mentor will provide specific and individualised support, and the continuity that this has the potential to afford may support people during times of transition.

Developing a foundation of engagement and a sense of belonging is crucial. Creating space and places where children, young people and families feel safe and connected will empower and build capacity for community and individuals.

CfC FP program interaction with other programs and services. Ultimately, children and families should have services that are holistic and 'wrap around' them. Building on already established collaborations, utilising the networks and commitment of community is key. Continuing to bring services and professionals together for active discussion, reflection and consultation is paramount, and will ensure a sense of connection and commitment to children and families.

Section 2. Community Engagement

Who we will engage with

Shellharbour CfC will aim to engage as widely and thoroughly as possible with the aim of having the most accurate and responsive understanding of the needs and aspirations of our community. We will focus on establishing and maintaining links and engagement with:

- Children, young people, and families
- Aboriginal community members
- Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) providers
- Schools, Principals and Teachers
- Local Council
- New parents, parenting groups
- Neighbourhood, Community and Youth centres
- Department of Communities and Justice
- Health services including Women's Health services
- Wider community
- Community groups and forums (e.g., Illawarra Aboriginal Community Based Working Group (IACBWG), Southern Suburbs Task Force (SSTF))
- Service providers (including family and support, multicultural, Aboriginal and resettlement services)
- Tertiary institutions, including TAFE and Universities
- Community of Schools Plan
- Local business community (including Community Industry Group (CIG), Shellharbour Business Network)

Purpose of engagement

The identified stakeholders, programs and services are key to community and are important resources. Having widespread connection, networks and resources promotes accessibility, sustainability and awareness of support available; as well as targeting key issues and gaps, as identified below:

- From the State of Shellharbour's Children Report 2019 (CfC, 2019) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' account for 3.8% of the Shellharbour population. This is higher than NSW's 2.9%. In total, Shellharbour has seen an increase in its population, of 696 people (36%), since the 2011 Census. A large proportion of Shellharbour's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is aged 0-17 (45%). This is 4.2% higher when compared to NSW.
- Household income data, within the Shellharbour LGA, is also reported in the State of Shellharbour's Children Report 2019 (CfC, 2019). With 24.4% of males and 16.1% of females identifying as having mental health disorders when household income is less than \$52,000 per year. An important statistic to note is that 18.5% of Shellharbour households had incomes below \$33,800 per annum. Additionally, other suburbs had higher rates of households with low incomes.
- It was noted in the State of Shellharbour's Children Report 2019 (CfC, 2019) that 13.9% of children required further assessment when entering kindergarten. Delays in organising appropriate funding for children with additional needs can have a detrimental impact on transition into school. With some funding processes taking up to six months or more, it is crucial that children with additional needs are identified and the school informed at least 12 months prior to the child starting kindergarten. This presents a need to work in collaboration, and to support children, young people, and families at significant periods in their lives, such as during transitions and/or significant life events.

How we will engage

There will be a range of strategies for engaging children, young people, and families. These will be created in response to individual and community needs, and ongoing community consultation. Opportunities to engage with community are as follows, and are based on previous, existing, and proposed strategies:

- Promote continued community consultation to authentically embed the community voice
- CfC Consultative Committee
- Community forums (e.g. community forums with Aboriginal community members and service providers)
- Meetings and presentations
- Workshops, community meetings and local events (e.g., Kidsfest, NAIDOC)
- Focus groups
- Newsletters and communications
- Stakeholder meetings and round tables
- Public exhibitions and submissions
- Information on CfC Shellharbour and Council websites and social media platforms
- Surveys
- Professional development forums
- Develop Communities of Practice (CoP) (Brettig, 2020)

The CfC Consultative Committee will continue to meet quarterly, and members will hold active, participatory membership that will be re-invigorated at the start of each financial year through an Expression of Interest process. The Committee's engagement with our target groups will be enhanced through creative strategies in order to increase exposure of our work and to connect the Consultative Committee directly with vulnerable children and families, and with local businesses and authorities, who are keen to strengthen harmonious relationships and partnerships across the LGA.

Potential barriers and challenges

CfC Shellharbour acknowledges that a range of potential barriers and challenges may present, and through the process of reflection and forward planning, these can be identified, and strategies developed to reduce their impact. Potential barriers and challenges may include:

- Accessibility – to service information, or funding, by anyone in community that may need it.
- Knowledge – distribution and access to information in a culturally and time sensitive manner.
- Sense of belonging
- Increasing complexity and challenges within community, which includes the recent and ongoing impact of COVID.

New or modified ways of engaging

- Social media platforms
- Online connection (e.g. Zoom, Teams meeting platforms)
- 'Being where the people are' (e.g. creating community hubs, localised and accessible places for holistic programs and support for families). This was identified in the Community Consultation (CfC, 2021b)
- Continuing to promote and provide evidence-based practice (Brettig, 2020) to ensure the best quality programs and support is provided
- A collective and collaborative approach that acknowledges areas of specialisation and expertise, that connects services within the community in the interests of children, young people, and families. The focus will become 'wrapping' services around the family.

Section 3. Service Area Vision

“...every opportunity that you have with young people can have a big impact on their life”

(Community Consultation. CfC, 2021b).

The vision of CfC Shellharbour is the provision of ‘the best possible start in life for children in the Shellharbour area’. This is informed by the Barnardos Practice Framework (Barnardos, 2021) which outlines the organisation’s approach to achieving the intended outcomes for children, young people, and their families. This framework creates a shared approach that collectively brings the vision, purpose and values of the organisation to life.

With high levels of disadvantage in the Shellharbour area, the service vision is to ensure a focus on improving the health and wellbeing outcomes of all community members, with a focus on those that are most disadvantaged.

Barnardos Practice Principles within the Framework guide practice when working with children, young people and families. Barnardos Practice Principles are:

- Being child-focused
- Keeping families central
- Building strong relationships and connections
- Approaching culture with humility, respect and curiosity
- Building capacity
- Helping clients heal from the effects of trauma
- Being evidence driven.

In addition to this, the Shellharbour Community Consultation (2021) provided a rich insight into community. The willingness of community members to contribute was testament to the sense of community and commitment to provide the best possible environments for children and young people to thrive. This Community Consultation Report is included in a suite of resources, which includes the State of Shellharbour’s Children Report 2019 (CfC, 2019), to inform planning and program delivery. The provision of programs that are founded on quality practice, are evidence-based, and are developed in response to the collective community voice is paramount.

The Community Consultation provided key recommendations, which include a focus on:

- Community Mentors and Programs
- Transitions
- Health and Wellbeing
- Community Places and Spaces
- Holistic, Responsive and Sustainable Programs

Together, these provide a clear vision for the next phase of CfC Shellharbour and are detailed in the Priority Area section.



Section 4. Priority Areas

Note: Evidence based programs that are potentially aligned with each key priority area have been identified

*These are provided to assist potential applicants for funding, and to assist the CfC Shellharbour Consultative Committee and Tender Evaluation Panel, to practically translate the strategies and actions into the direct evidence-based programs on the approved list that may address this Priority Area. This is the CfC Shellharbour's initial interpretation of the alignment of evidence-based programs with the Priority Area. Applicants for funding should conduct their own research and if applying to run an evidence based program, they should have a good understanding of how it meets the Priority Area as well as a more general understanding of the potential outcomes for the program. Applicants should not simply rely on the list provided. Applicants may also apply for funding for evidence-based programs not on the list below where they feel the program meets the Priority Area, as the list below may have unintentional omissions.

**It should also be noted that while CfC Shellharbour is obligated under our CfC Facilitating Partner contract to use a minimum of 50% of direct service delivery funding to fund evidence-based programs, this should not discourage potential applicants in applying for funding for non-evidence-based programs (i.e. programs not on the approved list). CfC Shellharbour is keen to encourage innovative approaches to local needs.

*** Applying for funding for one of the programs does not guarantee funding. CfC Shellharbour is undertaking an open competitive tender process and all applications will be evaluated by a selection committee. See tender information for more details.

Priority Area 1 – Community Mentor Programs

Overview

Mentoring programs and community mentors would offer support and encouragement to children, young people and families. A consistent, individualised and responsive approach to support community members will be developed and enable them to develop in all domains – including social, emotional, cultural.

Rationale

Children, young people and families thrive when supported and engaged. Developing a mentor program would increase connection and trust, with the potential to improve engagement in other aspects of their lives. A mentoring program would be twofold – supporting mentors as well as mentees. Mentoring relationships have the potential to strengthen a sense of community identity, belonging, capacity and cultural awareness.

Community consultation identified that a strength is the people in the Shellharbour community – their commitment, expertise and knowledge. There is a wealth of knowledge and expertise, and a sense of willingness to support others.

Excerpt from Building Stronger Communities: Our Community, Our Place (CfC, 2021b, p61). Consultation Report:

The importance of community role models, mentors and champions was evident throughout the consultation – as a strength, as well as being a priority and opportunity. It was consistent in the consultation that a strength is the people in the Shellharbour community – their commitment, expertise, and knowledge, and so this is to be embraced. The mentoring process was twofold – both for the mentor and the mentee. For children and young people to have a consistent and trusted person and/or group provides a sense of resilience and a sense of motivation for setting goals and aspirations. However, these opportunities are not exclusive to children and young people. Providing parents and families with a connection to a safe and supportive network was just as critical to support children. Creating a mentoring relationship has the potential to strengthen a sense of community identity, belonging, capacity and cultural awareness. It is by engaging in these rich and supportive relationships that a position of approaching culture with humility, respect and curiosity will be achieved (Barnardos Practice Framework Principle. Approach Culture with Humility, Respect and Curiosity, 2021).

How it Relates to Department of Social Services Families and Children Activity Outcomes, CfC FP Objectives and Barnardos Practice Framework Principles

CfC Objectives

- Supporting families and parents
- School transition and engagement

DSS FAC activities Outcomes Framework

- Children and young people thrive
- Adults are empowered
- Communities are cohesive

Barnardos Practice Principles

- Build strong relationships and connections
- Approach culture with humility, respect and curiosity
- Build capacity

Measurement of Success

- Create strong child-friendly communities
- All community members feel valued and empowered
- Capacity of children, young people and families is increased
- The health, well-being and early development of young children at the local level is maximised
- Benefits for mentors and the mentees
- Participants feel safe and a sense of belonging

Strategies

- Potential mentors are provided support and appropriate training
- Mentors engage with mentees often and with purpose
- Goals are developed based on individual needs and context
- Families / parents engage, as provision of connection to a safe and supportive network for families is critical to support children
- Encourage and promote throughout the community, with a focus on key people and programs, such as Community Partners
- Mentor support / development programs offered to strengthen skills and understanding
- Active involvement of community members, leaders and Aboriginal Elders

How Assets, Resources, Strengths can be used to Address Priority Area

- Mentors and mentees identified
- Connections made between mentors and mentees based on understanding of context (cultural, social, physical, geographical)
- Ongoing support provided to mentors
- Reflective discussions facilitated to evaluate effectiveness
- Practice is trauma informed

Evidence-based programs that are potentially aligned with this key priority area:

- Baby Makes 3
- Bringing Up Great Kids
- Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities (EPEC)
- Parent-Child Mother Goose (P-CMG)
- Parents as Teachers (PAT)
- Parents Under Pressure (PuP)
- Playsteps
- Volunteer Family Connect

Method to Collect Information and Measure Outcomes

- DEX, SCORE, other relevant measures, measures negotiated with CP
- Number of mentors, and number of mentees
- Retention and frequency of connection
- Involvement in other aspects of community, such as education, employment, support programs

Key Stakeholders

- All community members, including children, young people, families, parents, leaders.
- Targeted for Aboriginal members of community, young women, community members in transition periods
- Community Partners

Priority Area 2 – Transitions, Health and Wellbeing

Overview

Programs prioritise the needs (physical, social, emotional, cultural) of children, young people and families, and respond to the complexity and uncertainty of periods of transition, as well as the identification of key milestones. The community is aware of support services related to health and wellbeing, as well as trauma, mental health, positive parenting and periods of transition.

Rationale

Children and young people experience a range of individual and social transitions, and these can be complex. More so than ever before, it is a time of change, with complexity and uncertainty. It is known that families experience long waiting lists for health services, and so alternative support programs that are responsive and provide timely support are critical.

Excerpt from Building Stronger Communities: Our Community, Our Place (CfC, 2021b, p62). Consultation Report:

The Shellharbour community is complex, and in a period of change and uncertainty, perhaps more so than ever before. Families, school, health, and the community itself are facing pressures that have the potential to negatively impact children and young people. It is critical that programs are child-focused (a Barnardos Practice Framework Principle. Barnardos, 2021) and that the health and wellbeing of children and young people is prioritised. It was clear that the family is critical in enabling children and young people to thrive.

Children and young people experience a range of individual and social transitions during this period. The consultation identified that support for children and young people during important transitions are critical for engagement, staying connected and reaching their full potential. Key transitions were identified, including early childhood-primary school; primary school-high school; high school–further study or employment. It is at these times where children were seen to be most vulnerable, and the decisions and experiences influential. An example of this was provided in the 2528 'Girls ONLY' group which was established to support young girls during the transition period in early teenage years, an age group which has been identified as experiencing a lack of relevant programs and support.

Access to education and knowledge is imperative for people to feel empowered and have the capacity to support their children, as well as themselves. Throughout the consultation, participants identified that at times community members are unaware of the support services that may be available to them, or unable to find what they require. This was also apparent for some professionals. It is therefore important that a central and well-known source of information is created and made available to community. This may include a collective of various types of support, across community groups and provide the necessary details to ensure people feel empowered to independently seek support as required.

Relates to FAC Activity's Outcomes and CfC FP Objectives

CfC Objectives

- Healthy young families
- Supporting families and parents
- Early learning
- School transition and engagement

FAC activities Outcomes Framework

- Children and young people thrive
- Family relationships flourish
- Communities are cohesive

Barnardos Practice Principles

- Be child-focused
- Keep families central
- Build strong relationships and connections
- Build capacity
- Help clients heal from the effects of trauma
- Be evidence-driven

Measurement of Success

- Less duplication of TEI-funded programs
- Shifting focus age groups, such as moving into 8-13 years. Upper primary / teens
- Specialised, active, individualised and contextual support provided through transition periods
- Support is ongoing and sustainable
- Creating spaces and places for connection and belonging
- Utilising outdoor play spaces
- Participants feel safe and a sense of belonging

Strategies

- Outdoor-based programs
- Playground-based programs
- Community and Neighbourhood centres utilised
- Identify key people / places / programs

How Assets, Resources, Strengths can be used to Address Priority Area

- Identify key periods of transition, such as transition from the Early Years to school, transition from primary to high school, transition from school to further education and employment, transition to parenting
- Emphasis on programs for 8-15 years
- Emphasis on programs for young women
- Focus on connections, health and wellbeing, life skills, support, safety (cultural, physical, social) and food security
- Mentor program embedded 'everyday mentors'
- Programs and support for new parents
- Develop awareness of support, service accessibility
- Actively and responsively support new parents
- Practice is trauma informed

Evidence-based programs that are potentially aligned with this key priority area:

- Abecedarian Approach Australia (3a)
- Baby Makes 3
- Circle of Security
- Cool Kids
- DRUMBEAT
- FAST (Families and Schools Together)
- Incredible Years
- INFANT (Infant Feeding Active Play and Nutrition)
- Journey of Hope
- Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)
- Second Step
- Secret Agent Society
- Sing & Grow
- What Were We Thinking! (WWWT)

Method to Collect Information and Measure Outcomes

DEX, SCORE, other relevant measures, measures negotiated with CP

Key Stakeholders

- All community members; including children, young people, families, parents, leaders
- Targeted for Aboriginal members of community, young women, young parents, community members in transition periods
- Community Partners
- Community members with identified needs such as mental health, Family and Domestic Violence, trauma

Priority Area 3 – Community Places and Spaces

Overview

Children, young people and families thrive when they feel a sense of safety and belonging. The physical environment and location are embedded amongst practice and is provided through establishing community places and spaces.

Rationale

Embracing the natural resources in the area and embedding people in relationships and connection supported by culturally and socially responsive approaches. Community members need to feel empowered, and a sense of belonging, ownership and capacity. Building a sense of identity and capacity – individual and community.

Excerpt from Building Stronger Communities: Our Community, Our Place (CfC, 2021b, p64). Consultation Report:

It was evident that children, young people, and families thrive when they feel a sense of safety and belonging. Providing places and spaces, such as community hubs, community centres and neighbourhood centres where people can feel a sense of ownership and responsibility are key. These have the potential to increase engagement in various ways – with others and with services. These situations may support early intervention, reduce challenges associated with knowledge and access to services and build a sense of 'community' through collaboration and sharing. Knowing that the local environment is an identified strength of the community, consideration of these as ideal locations is a priority. This concept aligns with the Barnardos Practice Framework Principle - Build Strong Relationships and Connections (Barnardos, 2021).

Children, young people, and families need to feel a sense of trust and safety, identity and belonging. Creating places and spaces that are individualised, reflect the needs of the group and are culturally appropriate, such as places 'on Country' supported by identified leaders for Aboriginal community members, is paramount.

Relates to FAC Activity's Outcomes and CfC FP Objectives

CfC Objectives

- Healthy young families
- Supporting families and parents

FAC activities Outcomes Framework

- Children and young people thrive
- Adults are empowered
- Communities are cohesive

Barnardos Practice Principles

- Be child-focused
- Keep families central
- Build strong relationships and connections
- Approach culture with humility, respect and curiosity
- Build capacity
- Be evidence-driven

Measurement of Success

- Consistency and connection to establish long-lasting connection across individuals and within community
- Better connectivity and sense of belonging
- A sense of community ownership and responsibility for spaces and places
- Place-based culturally responsive space
- Place of engagement for stages of transition and interaction
- Continued sense of pride
- Participants feel safe and a sense of belonging

Strategies

- Build on current context, what is currently available in community
- Refer to and utilise resources in community, such as Shellharbour Community Facilities Strategy, Healthy Cities 'Play Illawarra'
- Develop and strengthen community collaboration and partnerships
- Identify potential community hubs, such as Neighbourhood Centres, Community Centres, libraries
- Multi-functional community spaces and places
- 'Wrap around' programs and resources for whole family engagement / approach
- Dedicated youth space
- Sustainability – long term engagement as well as short term
- Establish an inclusive approach, including ages, ability, cultural, social, physical
- Places and spaces that model / afford outreach and mentoring

How Assets, Resources, Strengths can be used to Address Priority Area

- Plan place-based approach
- Develop community-based Communities of Practice (CoP) that represent and provide a voice across all members of community
- Whole of community approach
- Localised and accessible spaces and places
- Community safety audit – look and feel safe
- Extend current programs to support a wider range of people – such as incorporating a variety of programs for young people
- Provision of programs reflective and responsive to community needs / voice
- Practice is trauma informed

Evidence-based programs that are potentially aligned with this key priority area:

- Circle of Security
- DRUMBEAT
- Parents as Teachers (PAT)
- Parents Under Pressure (PuP)
- Smalltalk

Method to Collect Information and Measure Outcomes

DEX, SCORE, other relevant measures, measures negotiated with CP

Key Stakeholders

- All community members, including children, young people, families, parents, leaders.
- Targeted for Aboriginal members of community, young women, young parents, community members in transition periods
- Community Partners



Priority Area 4 – Parallel Programs

Overview

Children, young people and families require programs, support and resources that will enable them to meet current needs. Individualised support provides a foundation for health and wellbeing, as well as a sense of empowerment and capacity. Support however needs to be accessible, timely and responsive. At present, families are waiting for extensive periods of time for essential services. The development of parallel programs therefore affords the necessary support for families while waiting for specific services.

Rationale

Community consultation has shown concern for extensive waiting lists and limited support when community members are needing it the most. The provision of parallel programs affords opportunities for children, young people and families to engage with programs, services and professionals at the most important and critical times. Being connected will support families and provide alternative strategies for help when needed.

Excerpt from Building Stronger Communities: Our Community, Our Place (CfC, 2021b, p64). Consultation Report:

Families are undoubtedly the cornerstone of community. A Barnardos Practice Framework Principle (Barnardos, 2021) is to keep families central, a concept that was valued throughout the consultation. Supporting families to be the best they can be, as well as seek and access support at times of complexity is crucial. Engaging children and parents in 'parallel programs' alongside each other may strengthen family connections, as well as a sense of belonging and identity. Furthermore, programs that are embedded within familiar contexts, such as schools and community centres have potential to be most beneficial, as well as accessible.

The provision of programs that afford meaningful and rich learning, as well as development for participants and support networks are to be prioritised. These require a reflective and flexible approach such as offering online support to deliver and/or complement the program. *'Children are growing up in a world immensely different to the previous generations.... Young people and children's access to online devices in recent years has increased dramatically'* (Brettig, 2020, p24).

We need to shift the current paradigm, and as was acknowledged throughout the consultation, the priority should be on play and play-based learning where fun is the objective and is at the forefront of all programs. Similarly, it is the child that is to be central. This approach is reflected in the Social Ecological framework (Feriver, 2020) which exhibits the child at the centre and the levels of influence wrapped around to support each child's wellbeing.

Developing Communities of Practice (CoP) may be an important aspect to ensure support for families is accessible and appropriate and built around community expertise. CoP are defined as 'groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis' (Wenger et al., 2002, p4). CoP have three key elements:

- 1) the community (motivated and innovative)
- 2) the domain (area of interest)
- 3) the practice and knowledge (Brettig, 2020).

The consultation process has shown these elements within the community; however, it is further collaboration and coordination that may be required to optimise these opportunities and strengthen and build upon what already exists.

Relates to FAC Activity's Outcomes and CfC FP Objectives

CfC Objectives

- Healthy young families
- Supporting families and parents
- School transition and engagement

FAC activities Outcomes Framework

- Children and young people thrive
- Family relationships flourish
- Communities are cohesive

Barnardos Practice Principles

- Be child-focused
- Keep families central
- Build strong relationships and connections
- Approach culture with humility, respect and curiosity
- Build capacity
- Be evidence-driven

Measurement of Success

- Programs are holistic
- Programs are responsive
- Programs are sustainable
- Strengthen current programs
- Community level – establish hubs
- Age specific and appropriate programs
- Child is central, programs wrap around the child and family
- Increased engagement and involvement in programs
- Participants feel safe and a sense of belonging
- Dual delivery, consistency and alignment of messages across age groups ie., Children and Parents

Strategies

- Provision of essentials – food, safety, social connections
- Mentoring opportunities
- Assess and reflect upon what 'partnerships' really look like. Opportunity to change, perhaps re-distribute power
- Dual delivery, consistency and alignment of messages across age groups ie., Children and Parents

How Assets, Resources, Strengths can be used to Address Priority Area

- Listen to voice of community
- Create opportunities where community feel safe to contribute and share
- Practice is trauma informed

Evidence-based programs that are potentially aligned with this key priority area:

- Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities (EPEC)
- Incredible Years
- INFANT (Infant Feeding Active Play and Nutrition)

Method to Collect Information and Measure Outcomes

DEX, SCORE, other relevant measures, measures negotiated with CP

Key Stakeholders

- All community members, including children, young people, families, parents, leaders.
- Targeted for Aboriginal members of community, young women, young parents, community members in transition periods
- Community Partners

Section 5. Key Stakeholders

Key Stakeholder	How they will be involved
Children 0-18 years, young people and families	Ongoing consultation and reflection. Participation in programs and services.
Siblings, parents, carers	Ongoing consultation and reflection. Participation in programs and services.
Community members	Ongoing consultation and reflection. Participation in programs and services.
Community leaders	Ongoing consultation and reflection. Provide support and specialised advice.
Community Consultative Committee	Ongoing consultation and reflection. Representation of community.
Community Partners	Ongoing consultation and reflection. Provision of programs and services.
Service providers and NGOs offering services to disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals and families.	Ongoing consultation and reflection Provision of programs and services.
Local service providers	Ongoing consultation and reflection Provision of programs and services.
Federal, State and Local Government services	Ongoing consultation and reflection

(Refer to Building Stronger Communities Shellharbour: Our Community, Our Place. Consultation Report, 2021, p77-79)

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