

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

## Overview

The Community Strategic Plan (CSP) is developed by the Communities for Children Facilitating Partner (CfC FP) and Communities for Children Committee and sets out a broad vision for the service area, identifying community needs, priorities and key outcomes.

The CSP is organised into six sections:

1. Communities for Children Facilitating Partner's Details
2. Community Needs Assessment
3. Community Engagement
4. Service Area Vision
5. Priority Areas
6. Key stakeholders

It identifies the key strengths, needs and service gaps in the community, considers ways to improve coordination and collaboration, outlines priority areas and strategies to address need and improve outcomes for children and families, and identifies key community stakeholders.

The CSP builds on the extensive knowledge that Facilitating Partners (FPs) and their Committees have gained in working with their communities, often over long periods of time. It will consider opportunities for everyone in the community to work together to achieve true change in outcomes for children and families. This includes community members, service providers, governments, non-government organisations, researchers and evaluators, and business.

The development of the CSP presents an opportunity to critically reflect on the strengths of local communities, as well as any opportunities, challenges and emerging needs.

The CSP is a dynamic document that should be reviewed as new data becomes available or as you become aware of changing needs within the community. It should inform the development of Activity Work Plans.

## Key dates and documents

All FPs are required to provide a CSP for each Service Area by **1 April 2022** covering the period **1 July 2022 to 30 June 2026**. You will also be required to provide a brief update on the progress of your CSP within your annual Activity Work Plan Report.

Your CSP needs to align with the [Families and Children Activity Outcomes Framework](#) (at **Appendix E** of the updated [Operational Guidelines](#)) and the Communities for Children Facilitating Partners objectives (see **Appendix A**).

Other key departmental documents that should inform your CSP include:

- [Families and Children Program Guidelines Overview](#)
- [Communities for Children Facilitating Partner Operational Guidelines](#)
- Your Communities for Children Facilitating Partners Grant Agreement
- [Families and Children Access Strategy Guidelines](#)

The Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) [Families and Children Expert Panel Project](#) website provides a range of resources and supports that you may find useful should you require further guidance when undertaking your strategic planning processes.

The CSP must be developed in conjunction with your Communities for Children Committee and signed by an authorising officer in your organisation before it is submitted to your Funding Arrangement Manager for review.

Please note that CSPs may be submitted at any time prior to the submission deadline.

Indicative word limits have been applied to the template, however additional content may be provided as attachments.

**Please contact your Funding Arrangement Manager in the first instance if you need assistance developing your CSP or you have concerns about meeting the 1 April 2022 submission deadline.**

## 1. Communities for Children Facilitating Partner's Details

### Facilitating Partner Details

Service Area Name	Bankstown
FP Name	The Smith Family
FP Contact Name	Marouf Hafda
FP Contact Title	Program Manager
Address	Level 2, 402-410 Chapel Road Bankstown200
State/Territory and Postcode	New South Wales 2200

### Community Strategic Plan

<b>Date Communities for Children Committee agreed to Community Strategic Plan</b>	7 February 2022
<b>Name of Facilitating Partner Authorising Officer</b>	Karen Russell  National Manager Early Years and Government Programs
<b>Signature of Facilitating Partner Authorising Officer</b>	<i>[Electronically signed by]</i>  Karen Russell

### DSS Use

<b>Date of Submission to DSS</b>	
<b>Date of DSS approval</b>	
DSS Delegate Name	
DSS Delegate Position	
DSS Delegate Signature	

## 2. Community Needs Assessment

### ***About our community***

The Bankstown Communities for Children (CfC) program works across the western half of Canterbury-Bankstown City, the most populous local government area in Sydney.

These are the traditional lands of the Cadigal, Wangal and Bidjigal clans of the Darug people. It is a small but proud and active community that nurtures its culture and heritage.

The proposed CfC service area includes 26 of the 41 suburbs of the LGA: Bankstown, Bass Hill, Birrong, Chester Hill, Chullora, Condell Park, East Hills, Georges Hall, Greenacre, Lakemba, Lansdowne, Mount Lewis, Milperra, Padstow, Padstow Heights, Panania, Picnic Point, Potts Hill, Punchbowl, Regents Park, Revesby, Revesby Heights, Sefton, Villawood, Wiley Park and Yagoona.<sup>1</sup>

The Bankstown CfC site is home to 236,242 people. This includes 42,299 children under 12 (or 73% of all children in the LGA) - 43% of whom are babies and pre-schoolers (0 - 4 years) and 57% of whom are primary schoolers (5 - 11 years). By 2026, the population is forecast to increase by almost 5,000 more children (0 - 11 years). (ABS 2016 and Forecast ID)

In 2016, Canterbury-Bankstown was home to 2,548 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with one in four under the age of 12. Sixty-three percent (or 1,593 people) were living within the 26 suburbs of the Bankstown CFC area.

Canterbury-Bankstown is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse areas in Australia, with over 129 nationalities and around 200 languages spoken<sup>2</sup>. Our diversity is valued by children and families in Bankstown and one of its greatest strengths.

Almost half of Canterbury-Bankstown residents were born overseas (44%, compared to 37% in Greater Sydney). The most common country of birth for Canterbury-Bankstown migrants is Lebanon, where 6% of the LGA's population, or 19,818 people, were born.

Canterbury-Bankstown is also a hotspot for migration from other parts of Australia and overseas, creating an increasingly diverse multicultural LGA. During 2019 - 2020, Canterbury Bankstown welcomed nearly 10,000 new arrivals, over half of whom were skilled migrants (52% or 5,207), 44% came under family reunion (44% or 4,377 people) and a small number of humanitarian entrants (4% or 371). These established cultural communities act as a key attractor for other migrants to the area, together with the generally greater housing affordability of the area and access to mass transit and jobs.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>**Note: Priority needs have also been identified within the suburbs of Wiley Park, Lakemba and the balance of Punchbowl located within the former Canterbury-LGA. Expansion of the CfC footprint to include this area has been proposed (pending approval from DSS) and data from these 26 suburbs is reflected in this document.**

<sup>2</sup>Canterbury-Bankstown City Council, 'Our Diverse City' toolkit: <https://haveyoursay.cbcity.nsw.gov.au/our-diverse-city-toolkit>

<sup>3</sup>SGS Economics and Planning Pty Ltd, 2019. *Canterbury-Bankstown Demographic Study*: [https://s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/hdp.au.prod.app.cbnks-haveyoursay/files/5915/7534/1855/Demographic\\_Report.pdf](https://s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/hdp.au.prod.app.cbnks-haveyoursay/files/5915/7534/1855/Demographic_Report.pdf)

Canterbury-Bankstown has the second highest number of people seeking asylum of any LGA in NSW. An estimated 6,000 people local asylum seekers are on either temporary protection or bridging visas whilst awaiting determination of their claims (RCOA, 2020). As of 2018, 98% of people on bridging visas (BVE) who arrived seeking asylum by boat were living in the CfC service area, with Lakemba and Wiley Park hosting the majority (52%)<sup>4</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic drastically impacted the Canterbury-Bankstown community, with local suburbs subject to extended lockdowns and restrictions, making the LGA one of the most impacted areas in Australia outside of Melbourne. One in four Canterbury-Bankstown residents are essential workers, playing a key role during the pandemic. Additionally, many local families have been heavily impacted by job losses or reduced work and income resulting in financial, housing and food insecurity. The community experienced continued separation from families in both Australia and overseas because of lockdown and border closures. This resulted in increased anxiety in relation to family members in overseas COVID hotspots on top of pre-existing fears regarding loved ones in countries such as Afghanistan, Myanmar, and elsewhere due to instability, persecution and safety concerns. Education disruptions caused additional stress for local families, with parents whose first language is not English and who do not have a good understanding of the Australian school system, having to home school their children.

### **Evidence Informed Approach**

The development of the Bankstown CfC Community Strategic Plan has been guided by an evidence-informed approach to explore the current state of child health and wellbeing and what a child-friendly community means in Bankstown. This has involved systems mapping, use of population level data from a range of sources as well as community and stakeholder engagement. The process was governed by our Communities for Children Committee (CCC).

This evidence has been aligned to '[The NEST framework](#)', a strengths-based, holistic, child-centred approach to wellbeing. Under this framework, six domains support the wellbeing of children and young people: *being loved and safe, having material basics, being healthy, learning, participating, and having a positive sense of culture and identity*. A review of community strengths and needs within these six domains has helped to highlight where we perform strongly and where improvements can be made. This will assist us to identify key opportunities for focus over the next four years.

The key outcomes from the 'Outcomes Framework for the Family and Children Activity' that CfC Bankstown will be looking to address include:

- Children and young people thrive;
- Adults are empowered;
- Family relationships flourish; and
- Communities are cohesive.

The following outlines key findings from the community needs analysis:

### **Children being safe at home and in the community (SAFE)**

Domestic and family violence (DFV) rates within some areas of the Bankstown CfC region are significantly high compared with LGA and state averages. In 2020/2021 NSW Police data ranks the Canterbury-Bankstown LGA 3<sup>rd</sup> highest by number of DFV related assault incidents and 8<sup>th</sup> highest per capita in Greater Sydney. This high rate of DFV exposes local children to negative physical, emotional, social and financial consequences, and to increased risk of being perpetrators and/or victims of domestic violence later in life.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Australian Department of Home Affairs (2021), Illegal Maritime Arrivals on Bridging E visa: <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/research-and-stats/files/illegal-maritime-arrivals-bve-30-jun-2021.pdf> (accessed September 2021)

<sup>5</sup>Richards K. 2011. *Children's exposure to domestic violence in Australia. Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice No. 419*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. <https://aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi419>

Service providers have identified domestic and family violence as a priority community issue, with an increase in DFV identified as a result of the COVID pandemic<sup>6</sup>. Child-focused counselling services was identified as a need, particularly for DFV primary and secondary victims. For families experiencing domestic and family violence significant barriers are often experienced through the shame associated with DFV as well as through the perpetrating parent preventing engagement with services, especially counselling for children.

### ***Child development and engagement with education (LEARNING)***

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC 2018) identified that 1 in 4 children (25%) growing up in the Bankstown CfC area are considered developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains, with children in some areas experiencing vulnerabilities more than 1.5 times the state average.<sup>7</sup>

'Communication skills and general knowledge' and 'Physical health and wellbeing' are the domains with the highest levels of vulnerability and require the most support. The locations that have the highest proportion of children 'at risk' or 'vulnerable' across the five domains are Wiley Park, Georges Hall, Punchbowl, Bass Hill, Lakemba and Condell Park.

During Child Friendly consultations, service providers reported that children are consistently poor on social skills in the AEDC, and that despite this there is a lack of support to teach them these skills. It was argued that improving social skills is much more valuable than literacy or numeracy as it has the widest impact on future outcomes in relation to both employment as well as a child's ability to build and sustain relationships. Service providers felt more programs focused on social skills and building resilience were important in terms of early intervention.<sup>8</sup>

A large amount of evidence points to the advantages that accrue for children from participation in early education<sup>9</sup>. Overall, Canterbury-Bankstown has a lower proportion of children aged 4 and 5 years enrolled in preschool (8%) and/or a preschool program (43%) than Greater Sydney (12% and 50%).

Engagement challenges continue in the later stages of schooling, with 1 in 10 young people 15 - 24 years being disengaged in education or employment. Canterbury-Bankstown also has lower educational attainment than Greater Sydney, with 34% of the population having below year 11 schooling compared with 29% in Greater Sydney. In parts of the Bankstown CfC area, this is as high as 46%.

### ***Child social exclusion, disadvantage and without access to material basics (MATERIAL BASICS)***

Many children within the Bankstown CfC area experience disadvantage on multiple fronts, and then face additional challenges accessing opportunities and family resources which provide social connection and full participation in their local communities.

Canterbury-Bankstown is currently the third most disadvantaged LGA in NSW with a SEIFA Index of 935. Children living in some areas of the Bankstown CfC service area experience some of the highest rates of poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion in Australia. Nearly 1 in 2 local children (0 to 14 years) in Bankstown CfC are living in poverty (>2.5 x national average), with children in Chester Hill/Sefton and Punchbowl the most socially excluded.

Many children and their families living in Bankstown's CfC area face complex and challenging realities. Their experiences include low household incomes, unemployment or job insecurity, unsuitable/unstable housing and high levels of housing stress, food insecurity and the highest levels of gambling harm in NSW<sup>10</sup>. Some have limited family support, language barriers and high levels of social isolation. The complexity of service systems and lengthy waiting periods serve to increase the exclusion experienced by these families.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with CB City Crime Prevention Officer, September 2021

<sup>7</sup> The Smith Family, Bankstown Communities for Children AEDC 2028 Summary

<sup>8</sup> Canterbury-Bankstown City Council (2019), Child Friendly Canterbury-Bankstown City Report 2019

<sup>9</sup> Early childhood education and care refers to services provided for children aged under 5 and 5 to 11 years includes: Long Day Care, Family Day Care, Out of School Hours Care (before and after school care), preschools and occasional care.

<sup>10</sup> Department of Liquor and Gaming, FY2020/2021

### ***Child and maternal health, including physical and mental wellbeing***

The socio-economic and demographic profile of Canterbury-Bankstown has characteristics that correspond to some of the most common causes of mental health problems such as high levels of unemployment, social disadvantage and poverty.<sup>11</sup> Health data indicates that 1 in 3 families and children were identified as vulnerable requiring intervention<sup>12</sup>. Eight percent of children under 15 are affected by mental illness with this rate increasing above 15 years and into adulthood.<sup>13</sup> Mothers in the Bankstown CFC program area are also facing much greater challenges than most mothers in other parts of Greater Sydney<sup>14</sup>

Additional challenges contributing to mental health concerns include social isolation and lack of connectedness, as well as needs related to healthy living and healthy relationships.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Children participating***

Families in Canterbury-Bankstown experience the highest levels of digital exclusion in Greater Sydney with many families without access to the internet or the necessary technology, or having to share one device between many family members. Service providers have identified the compounding impacts of digital exclusion for families, including being less able to fully participate in education or work, or to stay connected online. Online safety and lack of space, time, and privacy are other important considerations (for example having to do school/work in a busy household area).

### ***Children having a positive sense of culture and identity***

Canterbury-Bankstown is uniquely rich with diverse cultures, languages and faiths. Our community consultation identified that many people feel a strong sense of acceptance and positive identity as a result of this multiculturalism and diversity. However, some experiences of discrimination/racism and negative stereotypes about the Canterbury-Bankstown area were also identified. English language proficiency can contribute barriers to social cohesion and inclusion. Body image and self-esteem/identity issues are experienced by children and young people in both online and in-person spaces.

### **Strengths, assets and opportunities**

There are high levels of social capital, strength and resilience within the Bankstown CfC area. Community members were asked to give feedback on the positives that emerged during the community-wide COVID-19 lockdowns. The strong community spirit, mutual support, generosity and adaptability in the face of many challenges were strengths identified by participants as occurring within their own families or local neighbourhoods.

Community engagement identified high levels of resilience and the invaluable role of community leaders within local CALD and Aboriginal communities, in relation to both individuals and staff within established organisations. These people are proactive, well informed and trusted. Throughout the pandemic, partnerships and collaboration with these leaders ensured that critically important health and wellbeing information was received and support accessed by those most in need, including those hardest to reach.

<sup>11</sup> NSW Branch of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (2020), RANZCP submission into the 'Inquiry into health services in South-West Sydney region': <https://www.ranzcp.org/files/resources/submissions/inquiry-health-services-sws-region.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> Data provided by South Western Sydney Local Health District Bankstown Child and Family Health (2021) for former Bankstown LGA area

<sup>13</sup> Data sourced from (and further information provided in) South Western Sydney District Profile:

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=725853> - Note suburb data for Wiley Park and Lakemba not available

<sup>14</sup> Save the Children, 2016, State of Australia's Mothers: <https://apo.org.au/node/63692> and referenced in South Western Sydney District Data Profile

<sup>15</sup> Cred consulting (2019), CB City Youth Plan Background and Needs Report 2019' [https://s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/hdp.au.prod.app.cbnks-haveyoursay.files/6015/7534/0806/CB\\_Youth\\_Plan\\_Background\\_Report.pdf](https://s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/hdp.au.prod.app.cbnks-haveyoursay.files/6015/7534/0806/CB_Youth_Plan_Background_Report.pdf)

Bankstown has a number of well-established community organisations based within the CfC area. This includes local staff who are known and trusted in the community, and services which are known for adapting service provision to suit current needs, taking a family-centred (rather than individual) approach to service delivery and infusing cultural sensitivity and protocols into education and community engagement activities and support. One of the key strengths of the area is the relationships of staff who have developed long term relationships and worked with locals from children's infancy up through high school years.

Canterbury-Bankstown also has well-established interagency meetings providing important networking and capacity building amongst service providers, and action-oriented working groups collaborating to address local community needs. Examples of free initiatives include: The Transition to School Working Party's 'Stay and Play' sessions in the local shopping centre, aimed at encouraging parents to participate in playgroups; HSC support in local libraries supported by the local youth work network; the GP Early Intervention project providing concise early intervention information and referral links to GPs and families.

### **Current service and service gaps**

There are a number of gaps which Bankstown CfC will seek to address in this Community Strategic Plan.

### **Early intervention and support for early learning and child development, school readiness and ongoing engagement in education**

AEDC results and community engagement highlight the need for activities which focus on supporting the development of children from 0 to 5 years in achieving milestones in line with the rest of NSW. This includes enhancing bonds between the child and parent to emotionally and socially prepare children through the developmental domains which provide a foundation for better outcomes; support for children and families with disability, autism or other additional needs; and engaging with CALD families to build capacity and acceptance of delay/disability and to encourage getting early support if needed.

Service gaps include early intervention support to address childhood developmental concerns or additional needs. Barriers include long waiting lists in accessing professional services (allied health, psychologist, etc), eligibility restrictions, financial, communication, stigma, lack of awareness or acceptance of disability or developmental delays by parents. Programs and resources are needed for families while they wait to access services.

Families are often unaware of the importance of early learning for their child and many children in Bankstown CfC are not accessing quality early learning programs prior to entering school. This may be due to isolation, lack of awareness, cultural practice of elders caring for young children, lack of trust in government/services, financial, transport or other barriers. COVID has exacerbated this further with a need for school readiness and school transition support.

Service providers identified support needed for ongoing engagement in education such as: assistance in navigating the education system; understanding the importance of an education and the role parents/ carers play; tutoring facilities for children and technology to support digital inclusion and learning; support for children catching up on academic losses as a result of interrupted education; developing parenting skills and education with a cultural content across a range of parenting issues such as behaviour guidance, nutrition, speech, online safety; behaviour management support services and more support within schools.

Local schools, playgroups, mothers' groups, early learning centres, disability support, health services and community leaders will be key partners in engaging and supporting families from birth onwards to build connections with services, schools and learning support.

### **Social inclusion and connection, respectful relationships, mental health and wellbeing needs**

Mental health and wellbeing are key priority issues for children and families in Bankstown. Pre-pandemic data indicates that at least 8% of children under 15 were affected by mental

illness. Our community engagement identified significant increases over the last 2 years with long waiting lists for professional services and issues such as social stigma and affordability impacting access.

Programs which support resilience, emotional, social and coping skills amongst children are needed as well as parenting programs and initiatives which overcome social isolation in families.

Domestic and family violence is also a priority community issue for Bankstown families with safe spaces and child-focused counselling services, particularly for DFV primary and secondary victims, an identified service gap.

Programs focusing on safety, belonging and respectful relationships at home, across generations and across cultures are needed. Approaches which build trust, connection and are culturally responsive are critical when working in such a diverse community. This includes a need for programs co-designed by community members and in language. Community leaders/connectors, cultural organisations and bilingual workers will be key partners in engaging hard to reach or isolated families. Providing access to programs in-person and/or online may help parents to be able to connect with other local parents and build a strong community network.

### **Community connection and service sector coordination and collaboration**

Consultation with the community identified several systemic barriers for families accessing services. Examples include lack of: awareness of services, coordination of services, and lack of either trusted relationships/workers or difficulty in navigating pathways between services.

There is a small and active Aboriginal population in Canterbury-Bankstown who have repeatedly identified the need for a local Indigenous gathering space, which is yet to be realised. Local Aboriginal community members, including a local Elder, participated in our only face to face Community Strategic Planning focus group, where we gained not only valuable insight into Aboriginal concerns, but also greater awareness of Aboriginal community members keen to be included in actions to address their peoples' needs.

The need for services to be delivered in accessible, safe and trusted locations which may include for example, outreach within schools, co-located services or women's/men's only programs were identified. Soft-entry points can help to engage and connect families with services/programs. Community leaders/connectors and cultural organisations will be a key partner in engaging hard to reach and isolated families, especially those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

## Community Engagement

### Who we engaged to develop the CSP

Bankstown CfC FP leveraged community networks and relationships with Community Partners to deliver a number of focus groups targeted to Aboriginal and CALD parents/carers. This helped to overcome trust, language, literacy or digital access barriers and ensure the voices and diverse perspectives of community members from a representative sample of children, young people, families and stakeholders in the local area were captured.

Bankstown's Communities for Children Committee (CCC) and CSP working groups provided comprehensive community representation, supported consultation initiatives and strengthened knowledge and processes. These groups supported the extensive research and consultation process undertaken to develop the Bankstown Community Strategic Plan 2022 – 2026.

Businesses were engaged to broaden the previous CSP and to promote the role businesses can play in the process of engaging and supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged families and their children within the CfC community.

### Who we engaged in our consultations

We consulted with 335 community members and stakeholders: 38% (or 137 people) were children and young people (aged 2 - 18 years) and 71% (or 239 were parents/carers). Children and families represented a range of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds with 28 languages (other than English) spoken. 2% of participants identified as Aboriginal. 68 service providers and 8 real estate agents were also engaged.

Due to the impact of COVID-19 during the consultation process, Bankstown CfC FP utilised a broad range of engagement methods to capture as many local voices as possible. This included online and face to face surveys, 1:1 telephone interviews, and online and face to face focus groups. A child-friendly activity was developed for early childhood and primary school settings to ensure the voices of young children were represented. Community members were also invited to respond to three engagement questions by adding responses to an interactive tree in Bankstown's Bryan Brown Centre.

\$25 gift cards were given to interview and focus group participants in thanks for their time and context expertise.

### Who and how we will engage in implementing the CSP

Bankstown CfC will continue to use place-based practices by combining both universal and targeted approaches when engaging with the community, and by supporting both general services or specific/inclusive services based on the identified needs of our diverse community. There will also be opportunities to promote sound service provision through collaborations amongst funded Community Partners and other services. This will support marginalised community members who require support with additional needs such as Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander and CALD communities, new arrival/refugee families, school readiness/transition processes and vulnerable or disadvantaged families.

CfC Bankstown will aim to use a variety of strategies to ensure the ongoing and genuine participation of various area stakeholders to allow for positive and continuous community engagement. Additionally, expanding the footprint area of CfC Bankstown to reach the suburbs of Punchbowl, Wiley Park and Lakemba will allow the surrounding community an opportunity to address identified needs and build a trusted relationship between funded Community Partners and the CfC FP.

To ensure improved and ongoing engagement, new connections and links developed over the course of the consultation period will be strengthened and others continually sought. Key collaborations will include:

CfC Bankstown has many regular opportunities to engage with service providers and community members through our **CCC and Community Partner meetings**. This combined with regular attendance at **key interagency meetings** and **contribution to working parties** helps us to maintain strong relationships with important community service providers. Business engagement will be enhanced with attendance at Canterbury Bankstown Council's Business Networking, Chamber of Commerce and other CALD networking.

Bankstown CfC has good and growing working relationships with **community sector and government funded agencies** across the Local Government Area, particularly in the former Bankstown LGA. Communication and collaboration with these on-the-ground agencies is critical in helping us to understand, support and initiate strategies to strengthen the Bankstown community, including our proposed suburbs of Lakemba, Punchbowl and Wiley Park.

The CfCFP is well established in **local interagency network and working parties** focussing on early childhood, professional and family capacity building, multicultural and Aboriginal communities. Involvement in these groups has proven to be essential in raising and maintaining our awareness of community needs, strengths and resources, and will therefore continue and grow.

The CfCFP has been actively strengthening links with local **Aboriginal elders and community forums** in order to support local Aboriginal children, families and community. While the local Koori Network is no longer running, we will seek to join the monthly South West Koori Interagency, and to actively support important annual events such as Sorry Day and NAIDOC Week.

We will seek ongoing engagement with **parents and carers of children 0-12 (and may include children up to age 18) years** by leveraging relationships with community partners and service providers who work directly with families. Insights from families' lived experience are essential to support our understanding of local needs.

Bankstown CfCFP has established positive working relationships with **local Council leaders** in the Child & Family, Youth, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Children's Services and Community Development sections. These essential connections will continue through this funding period.

Our CSP Culture, Inclusion and Diversity working group provided us with greater insight into the needs of **culturally diverse communities** in Canterbury Bankstown, particularly in our proposed expanded footprint of Lakemba, Wiley Park and Punchbowl. This collaboration deepened our existing working relationship, and this connection will continue to deepen through our active involvement in Multicultural Network meetings, as well as working parties in these 3 new suburbs for Bankstown CfC

**School principals, teachers and staff** have critically important knowledge of local children and families. Collaboration with local schools was initiated in 2021 prior to the most recent COVID outbreak. All parties reported finding this valuable, and the CfCFP will seek to re-engage with key schools over this coming funding period. Relationships with local **school hubs and SaCCs** are already strong and are of great support in helping us to maintain awareness of child and family needs, and to be involved in useful initiatives.

The **Department of Communities and Justice** often works with the most vulnerable people in our community, and our local Commissioning and Planning Officer is a member of our CCC.

A senior practitioner from Bankstown's **Child and Family Health** joined our CCC and CSP working party last year, and has proven to be a rich source of insightful information about the status of mothers and young children in Bankstown. Collaborative work through this connection will continue, and we also have good communication with Bankstown's Women's Health Centre.

**Online engagement** is critical, as Zoom meetings and forums continue to be necessary. Our local online engagement is supported through community sector contributions to CfC Bankstown's well-established **fortnightly newsletter**. The CfCFP also helps to administer Canterbury Bankstown's Playgroup network Facebook page.

Some **challenges we foresee** in the coming four years include:

- Continued impacts of COVID-19 impacting on service delivery, housing and material basics, employment, schooling and community engagement
- Exhaustion with online delivery amongst both community members and service providers
- Lack of digital access for many local families
- The need for a reliable and effective source of service information for diverse communities
- Predicted population growth impacting on already stretched affordable housing stock

**Strategies we will use to meet these challenges**

None of the above challenges will be resolved quickly. However, COVID and our Strategic Planning process have strengthened our awareness of these needs, as well as of the passion and resourcefulness of the local community sector and of community members themselves. We will keep these challenges on the agenda of local interagencies, working parties and Council representatives and be actively involved in working to address them.

### 3. Service Area Vision

CFC Bankstown asked community members and local services their aspirations for families and children in our community, allowing for safe and nurturing environments. It was important to reflect on our previous vision ensuring it was relevant and encompassed the values the community believe are required to effect positive change for families and children.

Our new vision for 2021-2026 is:

***“We are a resilient, culturally diverse community enhancing opportunities for families and children to thrive in safe and healthy environments”***

Findings from our consultations were carefully collated and presented to our CCC. The CFC team designed and facilitated workshops, which included CCC members who volunteered to explore a new vision and priority areas for our community. The workshops aimed at:

- Analysing and interpreting our consultation data
- Identifying needs within the community
- Ensuring all cohorts within the community are reflected in our planning and design of future CFC activities
- Review and evaluation of our vision and priorities

This part of the consultation produced the following key themes:

- Activities need to support connection and engagement
- Focus on capacity building and strengths-based approaches
- Capacity building for ongoing parent support
- Appropriate digital access for children and families
- Educational support and transition to school
- Child development, play and early learning
- Emotional and social resilience programs for children, particularly Aboriginal children who are doing relatively well through primary school but are reportedly becoming disengaged following transition to high school

Our CCC, CSP working group, CFC team and community sector connections contributed to our new vision focusing on resilience in our community, building on strengths in diversity and the importance of safe and healthy environments for children and families to thrive. The vision was reviewed and formally adopted by the CCC.

Our new vision will allow CFC Bankstown to work collaboratively with local community and services to address community concerns and build on its strengths in shaping positive futures for families and children.

## 4. Priority Areas

### Priority Area One

**Resilient and diverse** - Focusing on safety, belonging and respectful relationships at home, across generations, faiths, cultures, genders and ages. Supporting connection to culture and community participation for positive mental and physical health.

#### *Why this priority area was chosen*

Canterbury-Bankstown is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse local government areas in Australia, with almost half of the population (44%) being born overseas.

- Sixty percent of area residents speak a language other than English and 13% do not speak English well or at all.
- Canterbury Bankstown has the second highest number of people seeking asylum of any LGA in NSW.
- Both community members and service providers mentioned the need for culturally responsive services, bi-cultural workers, in-language, co-design
- Parents are concerned about children losing respect for their cultural heritage, language, customs, faith and family connections.
- Aboriginal and culturally diverse community members highlight the importance of community spaces and events where people can come together, maintain their cultural heritage, language, customs, faith and family connections.
- Service providers identified mental health as one of the key priority issues for children and families in Canterbury Bankstown. Anxiety and stress have been exacerbated by the pandemic due to job losses/instability, concerns for families overseas, and home schooling.
- Nearly 1 in 2 children up to age 14 are living in poverty in Canterbury-Bankstown. Service providers rated financial hardship as one of Bankstown's top 3 priorities in our 2021 CfC consultations.
- The Canterbury-Bankstown LGA has the 3rd highest number of reported domestic violence incidents in Greater Sydney, with an 11% increase over the 24 month period up to December 2020<sup>16</sup>.
- Only an estimated 40% of adults within Canterbury Bankstown felt very safe/safe walking alone in the local area after dark.<sup>17</sup>
- Bullying (predominantly in the context of school) was identified by children, young people and service providers as a key safety issue affecting children in the *Canterbury Bankstown Youth Action Plan 2019 - 2023*.
- Cyber-bullying was raised as an issue by children and young people during Bankstown CfC 2021 community consultations.
- Access to services and community activities is limited in Bankstown due to the following factors:
  - Lack of transport in some areas restricts community engagement and service access
  - Difficulty accessing information about available services
  - Distrust in government and in other service providers due to previous experiences
  - Shame about seeking assistance

#### **Outcomes and Objectives:**

<sup>16</sup> NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) data (for period up to December 2020) 60-month trend data and LGA ranking for 17 major crime categories

<sup>17</sup> PHIDU (2018), Social Health Atlas of Australia

*Outcomes Framework Families and Children Activity: 'Communities are cohesive'*  
**outcomes:** Communities are safe; Communities are inclusive; communities understand issues facing children, youth and families; all community members are able to participate in decision making; services are accessible, appropriate and inclusive; services have the capacity to respond to children's and families' needs, **'Children and young people thrive', and 'Adults are empowered' outcomes:** Strong connections to social supports and the community, increased resilience, positive mental health and wellbeing, positive social relationships, safe at home and in the community, greater participation in decision-making, positive engagement in education and training, strong connection to culture, improved self-efficacy and confidence.

*CfC FP Objectives:*

- 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 in Bankstown.
- To improve the health and well-being of families and the development of young children, from before birth through to age 12 years (but may include children up to age 18 years), paying special attention to:
  - Supporting families and parents - supporting parents to provide children with secure attachment, consistent discipline and quality environments that are stable, positive, stimulating, safe and secure

**Strategies to achieve improvements**

**Funded direct service delivery** by investing in activities that:

- Promote respectful relationship building in children, young people, families within and across cultures
- Use evidence-informed practices to improve age-appropriate child development and successful engagement in formal education settings
- Acknowledge and explore diverse cultural practices in relationships and parenting, while supporting families to understand and adjust to local customs and expectations
- Encourage positive caregiver-child relationships
- Uses trauma informed and person-centred practice
- Authentically provide opportunities for participants of all ages to participate in decision making
- Provide opportunities for creative cultural expression through arts, recreation, community events

**Facilitating Partner activities:**

- Active participation in working parties providing advocacy, community engagement, community and professional capacity building
- Publishing of community sector newsletter promoting child and family focussed opportunities for recreation, learning, health and celebration
- Continuous evidence-based measurements to determine efficacy of CfC funded activities, and adaptations as needed to help ensure CFC objectives are being met

**Relevant community assets, resources, strengths:**

- Our community consultations repeatedly indicated that families love the area's rich cultural diversity, parks and recreation areas, access to services, community events.

- Canterbury Bankstown service providers are passionate about supporting community and building community capacity.
- The entire local community - children through to the elderly, and the entire NGO and government sector - has had to adapt through COVID. This has contributed to greater awareness of services for community members, collaboration between services, and greater versatility in service delivery.
- Aboriginal community elders and community networks
- Multicultural Network, refugee and migrant-serving organisations
- Local community centres and libraries
- Relevant interagency networks and working parties
- Formal and informal community leaders
- Education services including early childhood settings, primary schools, TAFE, school hubs and SaCCs
- Community partner and Committee member knowledge, resources and skills
- Local health and government networks and resources

**Outcomes Measurement:**

Client outcomes measured through observation and surveys (pre and post service) as per DSS data collection; BOCSAR, ABS, AEDC, Bankstown Child and Family Vulnerability data, and other health and education data at appropriate scales will measure contribution to change over time.

**Key Stakeholders:**

- Children 0 - 12 (may include up to age 18) and their families
- Community Services sector organisations
- Early learning services and preschools
- Government Agencies and departments – schools, housing, health, Council
- Networks and inter-agencies
- Businesses

## Priority Area Two

**Thriving through continuous learning** - Investing in parents as children's first teachers, including access to early learning and developmental support for positive school transitions. Lifelong learning and participation from birth, with particular focus among children 0-12 (and may include up to age 18) and their families.

- 1 in 4 children in our service area are developmentally vulnerable in one or more AEDC domains, with 1 in 3 children being developmentally 'at risk' in communication skills and general knowledge
- In the Bankstown CfC area, including the suburbs in our expanded footprint, only 43% of children age 4 & 5 years attend pre-school programs. The lowest attendance rates are in Lakemba (29%) and Wiley Park (31%)
- 82% students have a language background other than English (LBOTE) - 3 schools with 99% LBOTE.
- There is a lack of awareness regarding the key role of parents/ caregivers during their children's early years, and the critical importance of early intervention for developmental difficulties
- Social stigma and long waiting lists in accessing professional services (allied health, psychologist, etc).
- Parents are not always able to identify or acknowledge that their child is delayed or having difficulties.
- 58% of public schools within this CfC area are considered disadvantaged, with between one and two thirds of students identified as socio-educationally disadvantaged
- The Canterbury Bankstown area was one of those most severely impacted by the COVID pandemic, resulting in:
  - Interrupted education and support for children catching up on academic losses
  - Truancy rates and disengagement from education
- Some of the support needs identified included:
  - more support units in all local schools
  - education affordability
  - digital access and inclusion
  - tutoring facilities for children

### Outcomes and Objectives:

*Outcomes Framework Families and Children Activity:* **'Children and young people thrive and Adults are empowered' outcomes:** Positive mental health and wellbeing, increased resilience, positive social relationships, safe at home and in the community, strong connections to social supports and community, strong connection to culture, greater participation in decision-making, optimal health and development, positive engagement in education and training; improved self-efficacy and confidence; **'Family relationships flourish' outcomes:** Positive parenting/ caregiver practices, positive caregiver-child relationships, respectful relationships, good communication, good conflict management; **'Communities are cohesive' outcomes:** services are accessible, appropriate and inclusive; services have the capacity to respond to children's and families' needs.

### *CfC FP Objectives:*

- To improve the health and well-being of families and the development of young children, from before birth through to age 12 years, paying special attention to:
  - Healthy young families — supporting parents to care for their children before and after birth and throughout the early years;

- Early learning — providing access to high quality early learning opportunities in the years before school; providing early identification and support for children at risk of developmental and behavioural problems; assisting parents with ways to stimulate and promote child development and learning from birth
- School transition and engagement - supporting children and families to make a smooth transition to school, and working with local schools to assist children and families with their ongoing engagement with school.

### **Strategies to achieve improvements**

**Funded direct service delivery** by investing in activities that:

- Encourage positive caregiver-child relationships
- Support a whole of family approach to growing up children
- Use trauma informed and person-centred practice
- Acknowledge and explore diverse cultural practices in relationships and parenting, while supporting families to understand and adjust to local customs and expectations
- Infuse into education materials and programs: songs, dance, stories, food, symbolism from diverse cultures
- 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
- Support children and families to make a smooth transition to school
- Work with local schools to assist children and families with their ongoing engagement with school
- Provide soft entry play programs to improve parent/ carer knowledge of early childhood development and their critical role in this process
- School tutoring or enhanced homework programs
- Use evidence-informed practices to improve age-appropriate child development and positive engagement in formal education settings
- Are proficient in making warm referrals and service mapping

**Facilitating Partner activities:**

- Active participation in working parties providing community and professional capacity building regarding early learning and transition to school
- Publishing of community sector newsletter promoting early childhood programs, parent education sessions, professional development
- May include provision of nationally recognised training opportunities to improve service sector capacity
- Coordination of communities of practice for local early childhood practitioners
- Continuous evidence-based measurements to determine efficacy of CfC funded activities, and adaptations as needed to help ensure CFC objectives are being met

**Relevant community assets, resources, strengths:**

- Good connections with schools, school hubs, SaCCs
- Aboriginal community elders and community networks
- Aboriginal Education Consultative Group
- KARI Aboriginal Support Services
- Multicultural Network, refugee and migrant-serving organisations
- Local community centres and libraries
- Early childhood/ parent focussed networks and working parties
- Early childhood settings, primary schools, TAFE
- Community partner and Committee member relationships with schools
- Local health and government networks and resources

- Some schools (e.g. Villawood East, which records the highest level of socio-educational disadvantage in NSW, and Bankstown Public) going above and beyond their traditional roles in order to support particularly vulnerable communities. The result: increased NAPLAN scores showing some students close to or above those with comparable backgrounds.

**Outcomes Measurement:**

Client outcomes measured through observation and surveys (pre and post service) as per DSS data collection; BOCSAR, ABS, AEDC, Bankstown Child and Family Vulnerability data, and other health and education data at appropriate scales will measure contribution to change over time.

**Key Stakeholders:**

- Children 0 - 12 (may include up to age 18) and their families
- Community Services sector organisations
- Early learning services, preschools, primary and secondary schools
- Government Agencies and departments – health, education, school hubs and SaCCs, council libraries
- Interagency networks and working parties

## Priority Area Three

**Connecting and collaborating** – Community members, leaders and services partner together to create a strong, child friendly city. Networks are expanded, increasing opportunities for community members to meet their own needs and to serve others.

- Canterbury Bankstown has the third highest rate of unemployment in NSW (9% as of June 21 quarter), and lower labour force participation (55%)
- Workforce participation rates of mothers are lower (53%)
- Work and financial security was the number one issue raised by parents in our 2021 community consultations, following large job losses and reduction of work hours due to COVID
- Food insecurity was also found to be an issue for many low-income families during our consultations, with difficulty increased further because of COVID.
- Compounding these problems, Canterbury-Bankstown has the highest daily losses due to gambling in NSW.
- Nearly 1 in 5 local households experience housing stress (19%), with the greatest impact in Lakemba, Wiley Park, Yagoona, Bankstown CBD. Housing stress is likely to increase, as by 2026, the population of this LGA is forecast to increase by +4,956 children (0 - 11 years).
- Canterbury Bankstown has the second highest birth rate in NSW, with 1 in 3 families and children identified as vulnerable and requiring intervention
- For families experiencing DFV, significant barriers are experienced from the perpetrating parent preventing engagement with services, especially counselling for children.
- Digital access barriers make it difficult for services to engage with hard to reach families
- In Bankstown CfC 2021 consultations:
  - Families reported that they valued a sense of inclusion, belonging, connection and friendly and supportive community/ neighbourhoods, and that more multicultural events, sport and recreation programs would help to increase social connection opportunities
  - However, the local volunteering rate (9%) is less than half the state average (18%)
  - Service providers identified the importance of:
    - Increased social capital and connections
    - Overcoming communication and other barriers including translations and working closely with emerging community leaders and trusted connections
    - Improved self-efficacy and agency of children and parents/ carers to effect change in their communities, have their voices heard and have opportunities to contribute more fully to their local communities
- Further action to strengthen Bankstown as a child friendly city is appropriate following on from Bankstown CfC's 2019 *Children's Voices Out Loud* project.
- Australia is a signatory on the Convention of the Rights of the Child
- All organisations in Australia serving children and young people must adhere to Child Safe Standards as outlined by The Children's Guardian NSW.

### Outcomes and Objectives:

*Outcomes Framework Families and Children Activity: 'Communities are cohesive'*  
**outcomes:** Communities are safe; Communities are inclusive; communities understand issues facing children, youth and families; all community members are able to participate in decision making; services are accessible, appropriate and inclusive; services work together to support families; services have the capacity to respond to children's and families' needs. **'Children and young people thrive'** and **'Adults are empowered'**

**outcomes:** Positive mental health and wellbeing, increased resilience, safe at home and in the community, strong connections to social supports and the community, strong connection to culture, greater participation in decision-making, improved self-efficacy and confidence.

*CfC FP Objectives:*

- 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 in Bankstown.

### **Strategies to achieve improvements**

**Funded direct service delivery** by investing in activities that provide:

- Initiatives which support connection and engagement
- Strong sector cohesion and cross sector collaboration
- Capacity building & strengths-based approach including support for volunteer-run community groups and peer support/self-help
- Parent support, connection and capacity building
- A range of communication and engagement methods leading to increased awareness of services
- Services inclusive of families with children who have developmental delays, disability or neurodiversity
- Culturally responsive services/ bi-cultural workers, in-language, co-design
- Effective use of warm referral strategies
- Support for digital inclusion - skill development, hybrid service delivery methods, technology
- Flexible/responsive services
- Safe and accessible spaces
- A multi-generational approach to community cohesion and service delivery
- Promotion of self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

### **Facilitating Partner activities:**

- Sector and professional capacity building in the social model of disability and other inclusion practices
- Enhance service sector cohesion, coordination and collaboration
- Active participation in working parties providing advocacy, community engagement, community and professional capacity building
- Continuous evidence-based measurements to determine efficacy of CfC funded activities

### **Relevant community assets, resources, strengths:**

- Business connections, eg Real estate and job networks
- Aboriginal community elders and community networks
- Multicultural Network, refugee and migrant-serving organisations
- Local community centres and libraries
- Relevant interagency networks and working parties
- Formal and informal community leaders
- Government services including Health, Education, Legal, local Council
- Community partner and Committee member knowledge, resources and skills

### **Outcomes Measurement:**

Client outcomes measured through observation and surveys (pre and post service) as per DSS data collection; AEDC, Bankstown Child and Family Vulnerability data, and other health and education data at appropriate scales will measure contribution to change over time.

**Key Stakeholders:**

- Children 0 - 12 (may include up to age 18) and their families
- Community Services sector
- Government Agencies and departments – health, education, school hubs and SaCCs, local Council
- Interagency networks and working parties
- Businesses, including Job networks
- Community leaders - both formal and informal

## 5. Key Stakeholders

In this section, you will provide details of key stakeholders, collective networks, partnerships or initiatives that will need to be engaged to support the implementation of the CSP.

Stakeholder	How the stakeholder will be involved
Children and Young People	Through service providers, as Service Users, Consultation,
Parents and Carers with Children 0-12years	Through service providers, Service Users, consultation,
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and community leaders	CCC member, Service Users, working parties, consultation,
Child and Family Services	Networking, partnerships, consultation
Lakemba Schools as Community Centre (SaCC) coordinator	Partner project to mentor CALD families in early childhood playgroups
Bankstown TAFE	Same as above, in partnership with SaCC
Canterbury Bankstown City Council forums and networks	Networking, partnerships, consultation
GP Early Intervention Project	Partnering and collaboration to inform GPs and parents regarding early intervention and referral avenues
3a Practice Network	Partnerships in sector capacity building, consultation, EBP service delivery
Bankstown and Canterbury Child & Family Interagencies	Networking, partnerships, consultation
Multicultural Network and Interagency	Networking, partnerships, consultation with particular relevance to working with CALD populations
Lakemba Rohingya Interagency	Sector capacity building, networking, collaboration
Bankstown and Surrounds newsletter	Sector capacity building, networking.
Canterbury Bankstown Playgroup Forum	Sector capacity building, networking, consultation
The Smith Family teams	Networking, partnerships, consultation with Learning for Life, Growing Careers and SaverPLUS
CB Playgroup Facebook Page	Sector capacity building, networking
Community Hubs and SaCCs	Networking, partnerships, consultation
Domestic Violence Interagency	Partnerships, networking and sector capacity building
Child Protection Working Party	Partnerships, networking and sector capacity building
Local area service providers	Collaboration, networking, partnerships

## Appendix A - Communities for Children Facilitating Partners objectives

- To improve the health and well-being of families and the development of young children, from before birth through to age 12 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; and
  - 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.