

FORUMS UPDATE

There were several themes that came out from the activity and survey responses from each forum.

FORUM - TERM 1

Participants want more integrated services (18%), access to a services directory (16%), better access to health services (16%), improved waitlists (14%), and improved family supports esp for families with visa restrictions (14%)

SOUTHSIDE INITIATIVE

The Southside Initiative is a community response to the AEDC data. Founded in late 2022 it is a collaboration between Woden Community Service, YWCA Canberra, Community Services #1, and Communities at Work. The Initiative aims to bring together stakeholders from across the southside of Canberra to explore community driven, realistic, and measurable approaches that will assist southside families. The 2021 [Australian Early Development Census](#) (AEDC) data highlighted a steady increase in the number of southside children identified as having a developmental vulnerability across one or more of the 5 domains. The Southside Initiative will adopt a collaborative approach to develop and trial community-based activities and initiatives aimed at improving life outcomes for the children and families.

Southside Initiative stakeholders include Government and non-Government organisations that provide services to children 0-8 years and their families, southside schools and early childhood centres.

FORUM - TERM 2

Community Partnerships - 38%

Schools want more access to parenting programs and case management with improved case coordination across essential services.

The Southside Initiative has developed two directories for parenting courses and the services that provide family support - links below. These directories will be kept up to date.

Basic Needs - 18%

Schools are providing a surprising amount of support in this area with breakfast./lunch clubs, transport and equity funding for families. Participants wanted more funding for basic needs including housing, food and transport.

Wellbeing Hubs - 18%

Attendees want more wellbeing hubs and community coordinators in schools.

The Southside Initiative is in the process of developing a workshop for schools on this and the next Forum will focus on how to bring services to Tuggeranong.

Parenting Courses

Parent & Carer Support Courses Term 3

Family Support

Family Support Services

Health Services Access - 26%

Participants want more access to mental health services (including for children 5 years and up, early intervention and allied health professionals and better access to assessments for spectrum disorders and ADHD.

The Southside Initiative, together with ACT Playgroups and Ability Action Australia are running a Loose Parts playgroup at Westfield Woden every Monday, 9.30 - 11.30 am with an OT or Positive Behaviour Practitioner available to talk to parents who have concerns about their child. This is a drop in group and there is no need to book.

Look Who's Talking - Developed by a Speech Therapist

The Southside Initiative provided free facilitator training to the community sector for those organisations to run Look Who's Talking groups. This program was developed by a speech therapist and play therapist/early educator for the Tasmanian Department of Education. Look Who's Talking is an early literacy program for parents and includes skills used by Speech Therapists with children and families. EACH has developed a community of practice for trainers.

There have been Look Who's Talking programs run in Richardson Primary School, in Arabic online and currently at Theodore Primary . Next term there will be a group at Charles Weston Primary. If you are interested in running this program in your school/organisation please contact Penny Stott on 0478 39 8872 or David Wild on 0408 611 076.

**Next Forum: Term 4
Focus: Pre-schools and ECECs**