



PROGRESS REPORT

JULY - DECEMBER 2025

BELCONNEN—A VILLAGE FOR EVERY CHILD

We envision a Belconnen where every child thrives – physically healthy, emotionally resilient, socially connected and fully prepared for lifelong learning and growth.

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Overview

From July to December 2025, A Village for Every Child (Village) consolidated its role as a place-based collective impact initiative supporting children and families in the Belconnen region. This work was underpinned by a clear and urgent evidence base. The 2024 AEDC findings identified children in the ACT as the second-most developmentally vulnerable in Australia. These data reinforce the need for coordinated, early and place-based responses to support children before they start school.

Building on foundations established earlier in the year, the initiative progressed from establishment into more embedded collaboration, with partners operating largely at the norming stage and in some areas demonstrating performing-level practice. Activities across the **Play, Outreach** and **Connections** focus areas increasingly reflected shared ways of working and alignment with ACT reform priorities, demonstrating cohesive, deed-aligned implementation.

Governance and Structure

During this period, The Smith Family joined the Leadership Team with Roundabout Canberra self-nominating to join the group. This indicates growing confidence in the Village model as an effective mechanism for cross-sector coordination aligned with ACT reform objectives.

Working groups for Play, Outreach, ADHD, and the Early Years Community of Practice continued to mature, while the Connections focus area transitioned successfully to the endorsed workshop-based model.

While operational commitments meant not all Leadership and Working Group members attended every meeting, governance remained effective through delegated participation, out-of-session contributions and ongoing commitment to shared objectives. Overall, governance and structure supported decision making, alignment of effort and readiness for sustained implementation of Village work.



Play Focus Area

Progress and Highlights

Objective

To embed high-quality play experiences as a recognised, accessible, and valued part of children’s development in community, educational and home environments.

Working Group

The current Play Working Group members include representatives from Abilities Unlimited Australia, ACT Education Directorate (Early Childhood Projects), ACT Playgroups, Capital Region Community Services, Cerebral Palsy Alliance, Game On Canberra, Ginninderry, Kippax Kids, Kippax Uniting Church, Prism Early Intervention, Tiny Teach, University of Canberra and Woden Community Service.



Key Projects



Alignment with the Deed



KPIs



Early Indicators of Impact

1

Human Rights Day Campaign

The Human Rights Day “*Right to Play*” social media campaign and Family Feedback Survey



The campaign aligned with the Deed by promoting awareness of children’s rights and the importance of play in early childhood development. The campaign supported ACT Government priorities by engaging families and the broader community in reflection on play, wellbeing, and inclusion and by amplifying consistent, strengths-based messaging across the day.

The **Right to Play** campaign delivered hourly social media messages on **10 December 2025**, raising visibility and engagement throughout the day.

The family feedback Survey was launched to understand what play means to families, what helps, what gets in the way and where could more support make a difference.

Awareness and engagement

- Hourly messaging promoted reflection on play and children’s rights.
- Campaign tiles were reused by partner organisations across social media, extending reach beyond Village platforms

Family voice and insights

- Family feedback survey initiated to capture lived experience of play in daily life
- Once finalised, the survey data will inform future Play focus activities and targeted supports.



Play Focus Area

Progress and Highlights



Key Projects



Alignment with the Deed



KPIs



Early Indicators of Impact

2

Early Learning Matters Forum

The Early Learning Matters Forum brought together a cross-sector panel of early childhood, health and education partners on **29 July 2025**.

Presenters shared expertise through discussions that strengthened understanding of high-quality early learning and care, highlighted the complexity of educators' work and recognised the diverse strengths educators bring to responding to children's varied needs.

The forum strengthened collaboration between early childhood education centres and schools and supported ACT Government priorities under *Set Up for Success*. It provided a structured platform for educators and partners to share expertise, build inclusive workforce capability and collaborate through sector-wide learning and expert-led discussions.

Early Learning Matters Forum attendance exceeded expectations, with 74 participants.

Post forum discussion and networking among presenters and participants supported cross sector connections.

Participation and reach

- Early learning centres, schools, allied health professionals and community services.

Quality and relevance

- 100% of respondents rated the forum 4 or 5 out of 5.
- 94% rated content as relevant to their role, average 4.56.

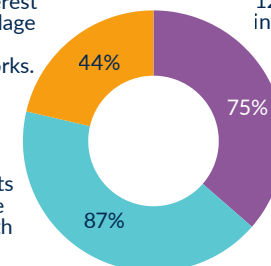
Momentum beyond the forum

- Resources made available via the Village digital library for ongoing access.

7 participants expressed interest in joining a Village working groups/networks.

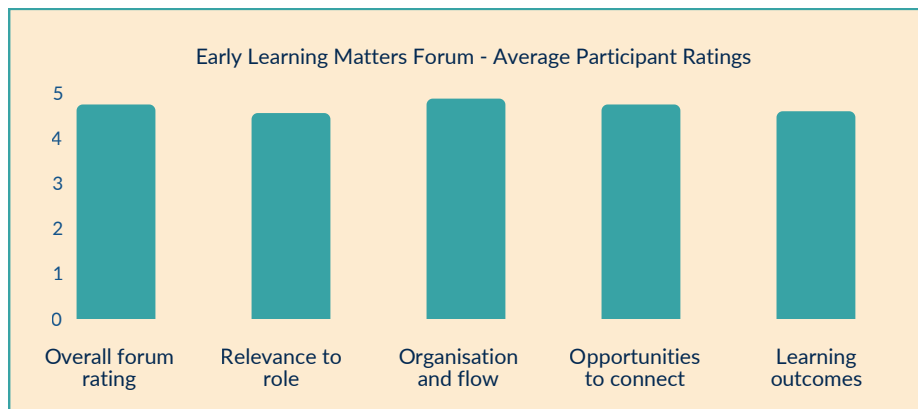
12 participants intend to apply learnings in their work.

14 participants plan to share resources with their team



*** Percentages represent overlapping responses from participants.

- 1 - Strongly Disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 3 - Neutral
- 4 - Agree
- 5 - Strongly Agree



I am new in Canberra, and it was great and very helpful to know some of the amazing support services here for children and families.



Participant



Connections Focus Area Progress and Highlights

Objective

To foster strong, trusting relationships between families, between services and families and across the service system itself.

Shift in Approach

Rather than a standing working group, the Connections strategy is now implemented through a curated series of workshops designed to meet emerging family needs and feedback.



Workshops



Alignment with the Deed



KPIs



Early Indicators of Impact

1

Oral Health from the Start

An Oral Health workshop was delivered on **5 Aug 2025** to commemorate Dental Health Month, in collaboration with Canberra Health Services.

Connections activities provided opportunities for families, educators and services to engage practically, enhancing collaboration, fostering community networks and promoting shared learning.

15 participants attended the workshop. Post workshop feedback indicated high satisfaction with the clarity, usefulness, and practicality of the information, with average ratings ranging from 4.67 to 5.00 across all measures.

Increased knowledge & confidence

- Post workshop responses showed increased awareness of dental services, CDBS eligibility and techniques to support children's oral hygiene.
- Confidence in managing teething, daily oral hygiene and making food and drink choices compared to pre workshop responses.
- Refer to the case studies section for further detail.

2

Co-Location

The initiative also supported collaboration across organisations by creating structured networking opportunities and enabling co-location arrangements, including Imagine More, Downs Syndrome, MyTime co-locating at UCK, and KidSafe running a car safety check during the UCK Christmas campaign. These arrangements fostered relationship-building, shared understanding and integrated service delivery.

3

Early Years Community of Practice (CoP)

CoP membership expanded and sessions will transition to ECEC-hosted locations from 2026. Engagement in co-located activities demonstrated stronger inter-organisational connection and integrated service delivery.

Practical and accessible

- All participants rated the information as useful, easy to understand and applicable to daily practice.

4



Outreach Focus Area

Progress and Highlights

Objective

To reduce access barriers and proactively connect families with the supports they need whether in schools, homes, or community settings.

Working Group

The current Outreach Working Group members include representatives from Doris Women’s Refuge, Florey Primary School, HIPPY Belconnen, Imagine More, KidSafe ACT, Kingsford Smith School, Libraries ACT, MyTime, Navitas, Noah’s Ark, Strathnairn School, The Smith Family, Woden Community Services and YWCA Canberra.



1

Service Gap Survey

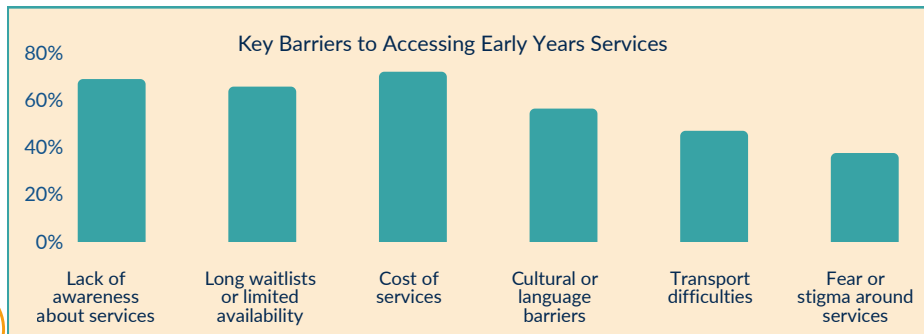
The Early Years Service Gap Survey was conducted between **19 Aug** and **5 Dec 2025** to identify gaps in the provision and accessibility of early childhood services, with insights guiding future project planning.

Outreach activities delivered against the objectives of the Deed by increasing parental knowledge, strengthening collaboration between services, improving access to evidence-based information and supporting equitable opportunities for families.

The Early Years Service Gap Survey captured **34 responses** from professionals working directly with children and families.

The survey contributed to identifying gaps in the early years services and will guide evidence-informed planning for outreach activities.

- The survey consolidated insights on key access barriers, including cost, service awareness, waitlists, cultural & language barriers and transport challenges.
- Challenges navigating information, referral pathways, and service systems were commonly identified, particularly for families with limited digital access.
- Additional barriers for CALD families were reported, including language barriers and fear of stigma or discrimination.
- A finalised report will be shared with schools and early years services.



I had the pleasure of working alongside the team for the past year and am proud of the community outreach we have achieved. We look forward to working as a team to succeed in our goals of 2026!

Child Safety Program Manager, KidSafe



Outreach Focus Area

Progress and Highlights

Key Projects

Alignment with the Deed

KPIs

Early Indicators of Impact

2

Allied Health Workshop

The Allied Health Workshop, co delivered with Noah's Ark, on **30 Oct 2025**, brought together families, carers, educators and allied health professionals to strengthen shared understanding of ADHD and provide practical, evidence-based strategies to support families of children with ADHD.

That's a very useful resource and helps map the process that makes it easier to understand.

— A family of children with ADHD



- 1 - Strongly Disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 3 - Neutral
- 4 - Agree
- 5 - Strongly Agree

The workshop supported the Deed by strengthening collaboration between families, allied health professionals and educators and by improving access to practical, evidence-based information. It aligned with ACT Government priorities by supporting inclusive practice, workforce capability and coordinated responses to children with additional needs through shared learning and accessible resources.

The ADHD Allied Health Workshop was attended by **58 participants**, including parents, carers, service providers and sector representatives. Workshop resources, including slide decks and recordings, were made available through the Village digital library and the ADHD Pathways Map was released to support families navigating post-diagnosis pathways and to promote consistent understanding across sectors.

Participation and reach

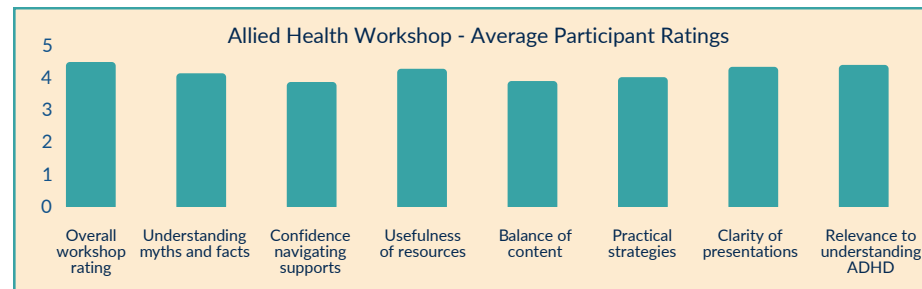
- Participants included parents and family members, carers and service providers, supporting cross sector engagement around ADHD understanding and support.

Quality and relevance

- Participants rated the workshop as relevant and helpful for understanding ADHD, with average ratings above 4 out of 5.

Momentum beyond the forum

- Participants identified strong interest in continued professional learning, practical tools, support groups and partnerships to strengthen ADHD support across the community.
- These learnings will form the basis for upcoming project ideas.





Outreach Focus Area

Progress and Highlights



Key Projects



Alignment with the Deed



KPIs



Early Indicators of Impact

3

International Day of People with Disability Event (IDPwD)

The IDPwD event at Paddy's Park was held on **5 Dec 2025** to raise awareness of disability and inclusion among children, families and the community, while fostering connections across schools and early childhood services.

4

Imagination Library Kippax

The Imagination Library Kippax Program expanded to Holt, Higgins, Latham, MacGregor, Charnwood, Dunlop and Strathnairn, strengthening early literacy outcomes.

Aligns directly with ACT Government policy frameworks:

- Best Start for Canberra's Children: The First 1000 Days Strategy – supporting parents with evidence-based information.
- ACT Wellbeing Framework – improving access to health information, reducing stigma and strengthening community connection.

The Imagination Library Kippax Program aligned with the Deed by strengthening early childhood development through evidence based literacy support in the home environment.

Over 100 parents and children attended the Paddy's Park event, with 14 organisations participating, achieving the intended project outcomes.

As at December 2025, the Imagination Library Kippax Program delivered 3,468 books to 174 children across 127 families since its inception in March 2023.

Funding was secured to support enrolment for up to 264 children, supporting program sustainability and future growth.

45 children graduated from the program.

Strong attendance by families and children supported broad community engagement in an inclusive outdoor setting.

Participation from multiple organisations strengthened visibility of local supports and services for families of children with disability.

Program expansion increased access for more families.

Ongoing monthly book delivery supported regular engagement with families and consistent exposure to early literacy resources.

Supported early language development and shared reading practices at home during the critical early years.



External Engagements

Village maintained a strong presence across community and sector events, including CYPC Day, Play Fest, Carers' Day, Indigenous Literacy Day, NAIDOC in the North, Imagination Library Parliamentary Briefing and Health Care Consumers' Association (HCCA) Child Development Conversations Event.

These engagements supported visibility, relationship-building and connection with families, educators and partner organisations. Engagement with HCCA also enabled co-development of a practical conversation guide to support meaningful, strengths-based discussions between educators and parents regarding children's developmental concerns and opened pathways for future resource development.

What's in Store for 2026

Village is identifying opportunities to contribute to the early years system through emerging engagements, including potential participation in the Families ACT Advisory Group, serving as an Associate Investigator in the University of Canberra's Good Start Phase 2 project, and exploring collaborative work with Community Jigsaw.

Emerging System Considerations

As Village outcomes increasingly align with the work of Health and the Community Services Directorate work, opportunities for cross-sector investment in early years initiatives are becoming more evident. Many project ideas emerging from Village working groups are health and community-focused and funding models reflecting this integrated approach would strengthen Village's capacity for increased project implementation. Expanding geographic reach beyond Belconnen will bring more concerted efforts from partner organisations that work in areas beyond Belconnen. Village's previously proposed shared measurement initiatives, including a common assessment or outcomes tool, remains a system gap and an opportunity for future exploration, especially with the CYFSP Commissioning process.

Case Studies

Case Study 1: Parent Outcomes

Participant: PR - Parent/Caregiver

Context and Key Activities

1

PR participated in a Village early years workshops focused on child development, safety and family wellbeing and events such as Family Fun Day and International Day of People with Disability. Her responses reflect outcomes at the parent and community level.

Alignment with the Deed

PR's responses indicate how workshops and events strengthened parental knowledge, supported confident parenting practices and promoted engagement in community-based early years activities.

Before it was hard to get information, after it became easy to find information about dental and other topics. They (presenters) explained information to me in helpful ways

— PR



KPIs / Outcomes Achieved

PR reported increased knowledge across key early years domains, including child safety, dental health, nutrition and screen time. Knowledge translated into behaviour change at home, including improved safety practices, healthier food habits and reduced screen time. Participation reduced social isolation and increased engagement with other parents, strengthening informal peer networks. PR actively shared information from the workshop with other families, demonstrating flow-on impact.

Contribution to Overarching Village Outcome

This case study demonstrates how targeted early years engagement builds parental capability, strengthens community connection and supports children to be healthy, socially supported and developmentally ready for learning.

Case Studies

Case Study 2: Community and Sector Outcomes

Participant: NB – Community Worker / Parent



Context and Key Activities

2

NB attended the Early Learning Matters Forum as part of her professional role supporting families. Her responses reflect outcomes at the sector, community and parent interface, aligning with Village Initiative systems-focused objectives.



Alignment with the Deed

Participation increased professional knowledge, strengthened collaboration between services and facilitated knowledge transfer to parents and the community.



KPIs / Outcomes Achieved

NB reported a significant increase in knowledge regarding early learning and child development, strengthening professional practice. Early Learning Matters Forum in particular reinforced collaboration between families, educators, early childhood services and allied health providers. NB identified systemic gaps and shared knowledge with parents, supporting increased parental confidence and engagement with early years programs.



Contribution to Overarching Village Outcome

This case study demonstrates how professional learning strengthens service quality, cross-sector collaboration and knowledge sharing, supporting children to be socially and emotionally strong, engaged in early learning, and prepared for school and life.

I thought I knew how important early learning is for children, but I got a better understanding of the roles parents, educators and community service providers play and how crucial that we all come together to support children.

— NB



Case Studies

Evidence Summary

Feedback from participants shows both increased their knowledge of child development and early learning and gained confidence engaging with educators, services or families. One reported change to parenting practices, while the other applied learning in professional service delivery, benefiting multiple families. Both shared information with others, creating flow-on impact and stronger community connections. These case studies complement quantitative data from events and workshops, demonstrating clear contributions to *ACT Set Up for Success* priorities, community and sector capability, access to early years knowledge and Village's goal of supporting children to be healthy, socially connected and ready to learn.

Conclusion

Between July and December 2025, Village continued to translate a place-based, collective approach into coordinated action across Belconnen's early years system. The work undertaken during this period strengthened collaboration between services, increased access to practical and evidence-informed supports for families and built sector capability aligned with ACT government priorities.

Leadership and Working Group governance continue to mature, delivery models were refined in response to evidence and feedback and early indicators of impact demonstrated changes in knowledge, confidence and practice among parents, educators and service providers.

Village remains focused on deepening collaboration, strengthening evidence-informed practice and consolidating gains to support a more connected, equitable and responsive early years system for children and families in Belconnen.

Acknowledgement of participating organisations

The collective achievements of Village would not have been possible without the continued commitment and in-kind contributions from all the people and organisations, including our funders who are proud to have been part of creating the conditions for children to thrive in Belconnen.



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