



Information Sheet

Using evidence to guide the work of the Early Years Network

Understanding and appreciating what makes your community, especially in relation to children and families is a vital early activity.

By building understanding of how young children are developing, Early Years Networks, in collaboration with local communities, can look at ways to positively influence child development.

Discovering, compiling, and analysing data provides an invaluable foundation to inform the work of an Early Years Network.

In addition to using the results of questionnaires and inquiry tools, key sources of general research and information are:

- [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#) for statistics relating to local government populations and children.
- [Australian Early Development Census](#) provides Early Years Networks with place-based information about children's development in local communities.
- [Child Development Atlas](#) maps data on area-level indicators of development for children and young people in Western Australia. Children's wellbeing and development can be influenced by the communities in which they live.
- Local government websites and publications, including what local governments commit to children and families in their Strategic Community Plans.

About the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)

The AEDC:

- is an Australia-wide census of young children's development, providing a snapshot of young children's progress at national, State/Territory and community levels

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- has been carried out every three years since 2009
- includes information from schools throughout Australia, who participate through teachers completing the Australian version of the Early Development Instrument for children shortly after they start pre-primary

The AEDC measures the number and proportion of pre-primary children developmentally on track, at risk or vulnerable across the following five key domains:

- Physical health and wellbeing
- Social competence
- Emotional maturity
- Language and cognitive skills
- Communication skills and general knowledge

These five domains are considered good predictors of adult health, education, and social outcomes.

The AEDC focuses on the importance of the whole child including their health, wellbeing, learning, physical health, and social development. As a population measure it reports information at the group level rather than at the individual level.

It is not a test or measure of school performance. The results provide information about how communities have supported their children (up to five years of age) and helps to understand how children are doing developmentally compared to other communities in Western Australia and nationally.

The AEDC data is reported at the level of suburb or town (local community) where the child lives. The primary output of results is through AEDC on-line community profiles and maps. Data is available on the [AEDC website](#) and it can be filtered by the local government area or suburb/town. It is also possible to refine the search across the five domains of child development and access maps and summary tables. There is also information available on interpreting the data for your community. Please [click here](#) to access community data.

The AEDC provides your community with important information about children's development in your local area. It focusses on all children in the community. The information can be used to understand what is working well in the community and can also highlight what needs to be improved or developed to provide children with safe and nurturing learning environments where they can thrive. The collection and analysis of community data and 'grass root' information supports the Network's understanding of local community needs and goals.



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There are several ways your network can use the AEDC to improve local early childhood development. These include:

1. To understand children's development across the community and the five domains of development. For example, to:
 - a) understand how local children are doing developmentally compared to children nationally and in other communities
 - b) use with other socio-demographic and community indicators to provide a comprehensive picture of early childhood development
 - c) pinpoint strengths in the community as well as what can be improved
2. To support community and network efforts and actions. For example, to:
 - a) provide evidence to support strategic planning
 - b) provide a basis for identifying priorities for action
 - c) strengthen collaborations between community agencies and stakeholders
 - d) strengthen transition programs and continuity of learning in partnership with schools and early years services
 - e) mobilise community actions around early childhood
3. To monitor and evaluate network efforts over time. For example, to track how the community is progressing in improving early childhood development

How can we achieve this?

- **Step 1:** From the [AEDC website](#), download the community profile and maps. Share and discuss the results at an Early Years Network meeting titled Understanding Child Development in Our Community. Key questions to help guide discussion might include:
 - In which domain/s are children more likely to be vulnerable? Are there domains where children are less likely to be vulnerable?
 - How do the results compare to the national and State AEDC results or other communities with similar characteristics to your local community?
 - How do the results compare to previous years? Are there emerging trends?
 - What might be some possible explanations for the results?
- **Step 2:** Gather community data that will provide a local context to better understand the AEDC results. This project could be titled Building the Community Picture. Context information could include:
 - What challenges might local families be facing that could contribute to child development vulnerability?
 - What early childhood services and supports are available in the local community for families and young children?
 - Are the local services located in the right place?
 - Are vulnerable families accessing services (are services accessible to all families)?
 - Are there long wait lists for services?
 - What are the risk and protective factors in the community for children and families?
 - What other indicators are available for the community, including health and education that will help understand how well the community is supporting early childhood development?
 - What other information is needed?
- **Step 3:** Use the information gathered and analysed in steps 1 and 2 above to prioritise your network's actions.
- **Step 4:** Develop an action plan.

More information

To find out more about Early Years Networks, please visit our website or contact:

- **Web:** www.communities.wa.gov.au
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