



PROMISING PRACTICE IN //BESTSTART

June 2024



Ensuring every child receives the benefits of kinder

Participation in quality kindergarten programs supports children's development and wellbeing. It has been shown to improve literacy, numeracy and language skills, foster creativity, build capacity for problem solving and support social and emotional learning. Although policy reforms in Victoria support universal access to early childhood education, many children are still missing out.

The Best Start program is a Victorian Department of Education (DE) place-focused prevention and early intervention initiative. It aims to give every child the best start in life by improving their learning and development. Best Start encourages agencies and services to work together to address challenges to participation faced by families and communities. This work is complex. It requires a deep understanding of the unique and often localised barriers to accessing kindergarten and testing bespoke solutions to address these barriers.



In late 2023, the Centre for Community Child Health interviewed Best Start facilitators across 9 sites to understand the barriers to kindergarten participation they were actively working on and the promising solutions they were discovering. In this Promising Practice paper, we share:

- the key barriers to kindergarten participation across these Best Start sites
- the distinctive promising solutions they have identified
- how the lessons might be applied in other contexts.

What are the barriers to kindergarten participation?

Our interviews identified 4 key barriers to kindergarten participation:

1. **A lack of cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families**
Intergenerational trauma and historically poor experiences with the service system means that kindergarten services need to invest in building trusting and respectful relationships with families.
2. **Limited strategies for welcoming and supporting families with low English proficiency or diverse cultural beliefs**
Limited language barriers, variable understanding of the importance of formal early years education and play-based learning, distrust of services, and unfamiliarity with the available universal services means that refugee, newly arrived and other culturally and linguistically diverse families are less likely to access kindergarten.
3. **Complex support needs for children and families experiencing adversity**
Families experiencing complex adversities such as financial hardship, poor mental health and the impacts of natural disasters can find it difficult to support their child to access and regularly attend kindergarten.
4. **Complex registration and enrolment processes**
A lack of uniformity to register and enrol children in a service within and across local government areas is a barrier to attendance for many families. Across many sites, a multi-staged enrolment process - sometimes including a central registration and enrolment system - can cause confusion and disengagement with the kindergarten system.

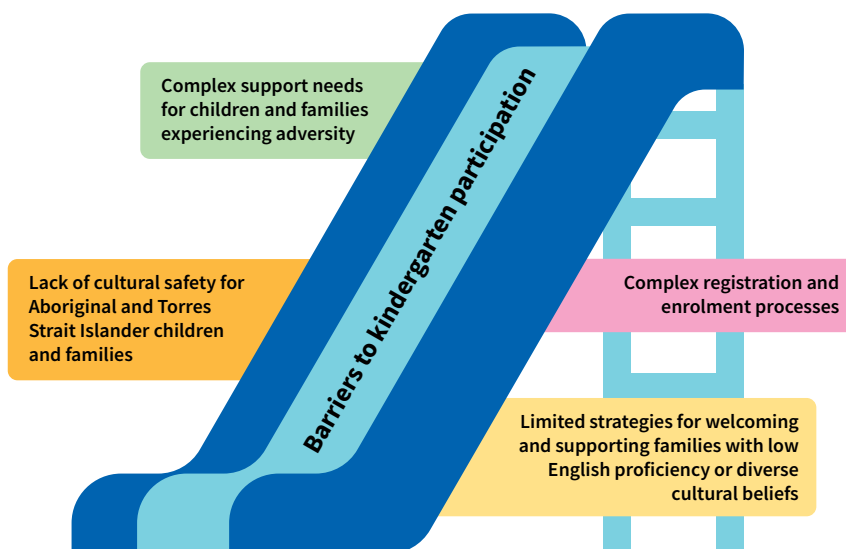


Figure 1. Four barriers to kindergarten participation



What's been found to work to address these barriers?

The following 10 case studies illustrate the strategies used by Best Start sites to tackle the 4 key barriers to kindergarten participation.

1. Lack of cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

Best Start has pioneered successful strategies for improving cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families across kindergarten and family services. By prioritising deep listening, shared decision-making and self-determination, Best Start has nurtured highly-engaged and active community groups. Key strategies for promoting effective cultural safety practices include engaging local Elders and leaders, building strong relationships with kindergartens, and providing cultural competency training and immersive experiences.

CASE STUDY 1

Prioritising deep listening and self-determination when working alongside local elders and leaders.

Region: City of Darebin



Challenges

- Low participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Early Start Kindergarten (ESK).
- Lack of cultural safety and awareness among service providers.



Actions

- Prioritising deep listening, shared decision-making and self-determination.
- Creation of videos using storytelling and involving local Elders to promote ESK benefits.
- Active engagement of Aboriginal families during filming and screening of the videos to identify barriers.



Benefits

- 82% increase in Early Start Kindergarten registrations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children within 12 months.
- Enhanced cultural safety and awareness among service providers and the broader community.



Partners

- Darebin Best Start Aboriginal Reference Group (DBSARG); Local Elders and community members; service providers; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children.



Strengthening the Darebin Best Start Aboriginal Reference Group (DBSARG) has been the starting point for improving cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children in the Darebin Best Start site.

In 2022, there was an explicit commitment made to modify the structure and practice of the DBSARG, prioritising deep listening, shared decision making and self-determination. This enabled genuine sharing and uncovering of the barriers to Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) participation. From this emerged a potential solution: creating videos with local Elders telling stories of the benefits of ESK. Engaging with Aboriginal families to produce and screen of the videos sparked conversations that highlighted additional barriers to ESK participation that will inform future work.



Shifting to prioritising self-determination in their DBSARG has resulted in a highly engaged and active group who attend regular meetings - often weekly - to identify and drive solutions. This includes the development of the *Nugal Murrup Buladu* – the ‘belong spirit grow’ video series. The series provides information about ESK, transitioning to school and support for children with diverse learning needs.

In the 12 months since the launch of the *Nugal Murrup Buladu* series, there has been an 82% increase in Early Start Kindergarten registrations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the City of Darebin.

CASE STUDY 2

Developing deep relationships with kindergartens to build their confidence and capacity to provide cultural safety.

Region: City of Casey, the City of Greater Dandenong and Cardinia Shire



Challenges

- Limited cultural awareness and understanding.



Actions

- Cultivation of strong relationships between the Tartu-nganyin Bopop Best Start facilitator and 18 kindergartens through regular visits and phone connections.
- Introduction of cultural awareness audits in kindergartens and support in developing Reconciliation Action Plans to assess and improve cultural safety.



Benefits

- Creation of Reconciliation Action Plans in four different services.
- Upskilling of staff to self-assess their progress against cultural safety criteria, ensuring sustainable improvements.



Partners

- Kindergarten services; Aboriginal artists and educators; Reconciliation Action Plan committee.



The Tartu-nganyin Bopop Best Start facilitator has cultivated strong relationships with 18 kindergartens in 2023, regularly visiting and connecting over the phone with kindergarten staff. This has enabled staff to be comfortable with cultural awareness audits being undertaken in their service and has led to staff engaging with resources and activities that build cultural safety.

In one service, a strong relationship with the Best Start facilitator resulted in the kindergarten engaging multiple Aboriginal artists and educators to develop an indigenous garden, a mural for the front of the service and use Aboriginal designs and motifs in the creation of a natural amphitheater.

Further impacts of the Best Start facilitator's relationship building with kindergartens in this site included the development of Reconciliation Action Plans in four different services and upskilling of staff to self-assess their progress against the cultural safety audit criteria, ensuring sustainable and ongoing improvements in cultural safety.

CASE STUDY 3

Building cultural safety understanding among partnership members as the foundation for improving cultural safety in services

Region: Yarra Ranges Council



Challenge

- Limited cultural safety knowledge within services and within in the Best Start Early Years Partnership.



Actions

- Extension of cultural safety training by VACSAL to external partners, including the Yarra Ranges Partnership.
- Organisation of immersive experiences, such as the On Country Walk, to deepen understanding of Aboriginal Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing.
- Prioritisation of testing improvements focused on promoting cultural safety in early years programs.



Solutions

- Establishment of a partnership between a local Koorie Engagement Support Officer and a staff member from a local Aboriginal community health organisation to conduct combined visits to kindergartens.
- Procurement of culturally-appropriate resources to be disseminated through maternal and child health centres.
- Proposal for cultural audits of each maternal and child health centre to enhance cultural safety further.



Benefit

- Increased understanding of cultural safety across the Yarra Ranges Best Start Partnership.



Partners

- Yarra Ranges Best Start Partnership; VACSAL (Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd); Yarra Ranges Council Indigenous Development team; Koorie Engagement Support Officers; Aboriginal Community leaders.

To improve cultural safety practices within services, the Yarra Ranges Best Start Partnership acknowledged the need to first enhance its own cultural competency, tapping into existing resources and their deep relationships with partners.

The Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd (VACSAL), a long-term partner of Best Start, extended its cultural safety training to external partners, including members of the Yarra Ranges Partnership. Members of the partnership were invited to an On Country Walk organised through the Indigenous Development team at Yarra Ranges Council, offering immersive experiences in Aboriginal Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing.

These collective efforts and immersive experiences have enabled a deeper understanding across the partnership of cultural safety, and have led to the prioritisation of testing improvements focused on promoting cultural safety in their early years programs. These solutions include:

- a partnership between a local Koorie Engagement Support Officers (KESO) and a staff member from local Aboriginal community health organisation to conduct combined visits to kindergartens
- the purchase of culturally appropriate resources (e.g. flags, language map, children's books) to be disseminated through maternal and child health (MCH) centres and proposed cultural audits of each MCH centre.



Yarra Ranges Early Years Partnership participating in On Country Walk



2. Language and other cultural barriers for culturally and linguistically diverse families

Addressing the unique needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families to improve access and participation in kindergarten requires a multifaceted approach. Cultural competency training and immersive experiences are crucial, requiring the enhancement of cultural competency among staff. Place-focused outreach and community engagement significantly enhance engagement by ensuring resources are used to develop tailored solutions and targeted outreach efforts. Additionally, technology can be used for CALD outreach to effectively engage diverse language groups and facilitate increased participation in kindergarten programs.

CASE STUDY 4

Intensive outreach to CALD families about kindergarten registration and enrolment in places where they congregate

Region: Hume



Challenge

- Low registration and enrolment for kindergarten among CALD families.



Actions

- Utilisation of expertise from a DE funded CALD Outreach Worker and an additional Early Years Project Officer.
- Implementation of targeted outreach efforts focusing on specific low-vacancy neighbourhoods within the community.
- Organisation of drop-in sessions specifically targeting disengaged families.



Benefits

- 17 outreach activities at Hume Library Storytime engaged 238 families regarding kindergarten registration.
- 15 school hub visits reached 99 families, providing information on kindergarten enrollment.
- Upskilling of more than 20 community professional staff on the importance of kindergarten attendance.
- Follow-up with up to 700 families with pending kindergarten enrolments, leading to improved relationships between services and families.



Partners

- DE-funded CALD Outreach Worker; Early Years Project Officer; School community hubs; playgroups; leisure centres; libraries.



Hume City Council is home to one of the state’s largest populations of CALD families. Best Start Hume used the expertise of their DE-funded CALD Outreach Worker and an additional Early Years Project Officer (funded through a combined DE Best Start and CALD Outreach Worker underspend) to assist families and services across multi-stage registration and enrolment.

Best Start Hume implemented targeted outreach efforts, focusing on specific low-vacancy neighbourhoods within the community, identified through their central registration and enrolment system. These place-focused and community specific efforts included conducting outreach services at various locations such as school community hubs, playgroups, leisure centres, libraries, parks, and community events in low-registration neighbourhoods. The initiative also organised drop-in sessions specifically targeting families with limited participation to build trust and provide essential information about available services.



Hume Best Start community outreach work

The initiative yielded significant outcomes, with 17 outreach activities at Hume Library story time engaging 238 families regarding kindergarten registration and 15 school hub visits reaching 99 families. Moreover, more than 20 community professional staff (School Hub Playgroup facilitators, School Hubs Coordinators, Hume Library Story telling team, and selected Central Registration and Enrolment Scheme providers) were upskilled on the importance of kindergarten attendance. As a result, up to 700 families with pending kindergarten enrolments were followed up, leading to improved relationships between services and families.

CASE STUDY 5

Harnessing technology to improve CALD family outreach and engagement

Region: Mildura



Challenge

- Disparity in kindergarten enrolment rates among children from families with language barriers and limited access to translation services.



Actions

- Using a local DE-funded CALD outreach worker and Best Start administrator to support the Best Start facilitator.
- Using the Microsoft Translator App by partners to disseminate personalised registration and enrolment reminders in families’ preferred languages.
- Direct assistance at kindergartens to help families understand registration procedures and requirements.



Results

- Engagement with families across 18 language groups by Best Start partners.
- Assistance provided to 42 children in registering and enrolling in kindergarten since January 2023.
- Support offered to 40 enrolled children to attend kindergarten.
- Implementation of a 'translation station' in one service.



Partners

- DE-funded CALD outreach worker; Kindergarten services; LanguageLoop.

Best Start Mildura observed a disparity in kindergarten enrolment rates among children from families with language barriers and limited access to translation services. To address this gap, Best Start Mildura developed a plan to use their local DE-funded CALD outreach worker, responsible for family outreach, with their Best Start administrator (funded through a Best Start underspend), responsible for data analysis. Together, using the Microsoft Translator App, they developed and disseminated personalised registration and enrollment reminders in each family's preferred language. The benefit of utilising this App is that it provides the opportunity for families to interpret print information, which is then accompanied by direct assistance at kindergartens to help families understand registration procedures and requirements.

The impact of this strategy has been substantial. Best Start partners have engaged families across 18 language groups. Since January 2023, 42 children have been assisted in registering and enrolling in kindergarten, and 40 enrolled children supported attending through targeted outreach efforts. The success of this solution is amplified in one service where a 'translation station' was trialled successfully and now has permanent iPads set up in each room to enable families to use the Microsoft Translator App or a mobile phone to access LanguageLoop's telephone interpreters.



Communication station using translation applications at a kindergarten service in Mildura



CASE STUDY 6

Supporting services to confidently engage with CALD families through training

Region: Bass Coast and South Gippsland Shires



Challenge

- Limited service knowledge on how to support the increasing number of culturally and linguistically diverse families.



Actions

- Extension of cultural safety training provided by the Brotherhood of St Laurence to the Bass Coast and South Gippsland Best Start partnership team and other early years services.
- Scaling of a kindergarten 'social story' book (taken from Maribyrnong Best Start site).
- Linking partnership members with refugee-focused volunteer groups and sharing local interpreter lists with service providers.
- Provision of 1:1 support to service providers.



Results

- Increased confidence and enhanced practice among service providers to engage with and support new and existing CALD families.



Partners

- Best Start Network; Brotherhood of St Laurence; local refugee-focused volunteer groups; ECEC services and curriculum developers; Bass Coast and South Gippsland Best Start partnership team.

The sudden recent increase of CALD families in the Bass Coast and South Gippsland Shires prompted a shift in approach to meet community needs. Best Start harnessed its network and looked towards other Best Start sites and partners to develop culturally safe resources and practices.

In 2023, Best Start partner, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, provided Best Start facilitators with cultural safety training to adequately upskill the Best Start Network on trauma-informed approaches to their work. Bass Coast and South Gippsland Best Start extended this cultural safety training facilitated by the Brotherhood of St Laurence to their Best Start partnership team and other ECEC services and curriculum developers – a first critical step in awareness raising across the Shires. Secondly, adopted from the Maribyrnong Best Start site, Bass Coast and South Gippsland Best Start developed a kindergarten 'social story' book showcasing pictures of local kindergarten providers and describing daily common practices to help families become familiar with their services. Further solutions entailed linking partnership members with refugee focused volunteer groups, sharing interpreter lists with service providers, and providing 1:1 support to service providers.

As a result of these concentrated efforts, service leaders have connected with local refugee volunteer groups and adopted the kindergarten 'social story' book, with an increased in confidence among service providers to engage with and support CALD families.



CASE STUDY 7

Bringing services together with essential supports to engage the Karen community

Region: Wyndham City Council



Challenge

- Service access challenges faced by the Karen community in Wyndham, including language barriers and lack of familiarity with available services.



Actions

- Organisation of a service engagement event at Wyndham Park Community Centre by the Refugee Health Nurse Program (RHNP) at IPC Health in collaboration with Wyndham Best Start.
- Adoption of culturally safe practices.
- Development of a translated kinder tour video.



Results

- Connection of 129 Karen community members with service providers.
- Increased interest in essential services like Maternal and Child Health and immunisation.
- Enhanced networking opportunities among service providers.
- Potential for broader community impact through scalable initiatives like the kindergarten tour videos.



Partners

- Refugee Health Nurse Program (RHNP) at IPC Health; Bilingual interpreters; Services Australia; CALD outreach workers; Western Welcome Wagon; Kindergarten services; playgroups; MCH; Partnership Group.

In response to service access challenges faced by the Karen community in Wyndham, the Refugee Health Nurse Program (RHNP) at IPC Health, in collaboration with Wyndham Best Start, organised a service engagement event. The event, strategically held at the Wyndham Park Community Centre and supported by bilingual interpreters, aimed to create a culturally safe space. This event coincided with the food bank's presence to ensure maximum outreach to vulnerable families. It also involved a range of services including MCH, kindergarten services, Services Australia, CALD outreach workers, and IPC Health to ensure deeper coordination, knowledge exchange, and collaboration and integration among service providers serving the Karen community.



Karen families watching a translated kindergarten service tour



Furthermore, families could access free clothing, shoes, toiletries, furnishings, and sporting goods through Western Welcome Wagon, a volunteer organisation that provides material aid to refugees and people seeking asylum.

In addition, a translated kinder tour video was developed, featuring community members, aimed at demystifying kindergarten spaces and encouraging participation. This video will be shared through social media and playgroups during 2024. The impact of these efforts was significant, with 129 Karen community members connected with service providers, and increased interest in essential services like Maternal and Child Health and immunisation. Furthermore, enhanced networking opportunities among service providers were noted, indicating a more integrated approach to supporting vulnerable communities. The scalability of initiatives, such as the kindergarten tour videos, promises broader community impact beyond the Karen community, contributing to long-term accessibility to essential services in Wyndham. A follow-up event was held in 2023 for Karenni speaking community members, with similar promising results.

3. Complex support needs for children and families experiencing adversity

Addressing complex adversities in a holistic manner requires collaborative approaches that use existing networks. Defining priority of access policies, using tools that identify vulnerability, and activating long-standing networks can initiate smoother enrolment processes and effectively support vulnerable families.

CASE STUDY 8

Defining and building understanding of priority of access in border towns affected by disaster

Region: Njernda (Campaspe Shire Council)



Challenge

- Significant kindergarten waitlists and limited priority access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Echuca.



Actions

- Facilitation of conversations and sessions to educate stakeholders on priority of access policies and enrolment processes across borders
- Implementation of advertising campaigns and outreach efforts to improve awareness of Early Start Kindergarten and priority access
- Collaboration with other departments to centralise enrolment processes targeting Aboriginal families.



Results

- 85% increase in first-round kindergarten offers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in 2023.



Partners

- Kindergarten services; local government (Shire); Aboriginal families.

Njernda Aboriginal Corporation, managing the Aboriginal Best Start site in Echuca, identified significant kindergarten waitlists particularly for those children eligible for priority of access. This is due to population growth post-COVID, the 2022 floods and misinformation regarding across-the-border families.

The initiative facilitated conversations and sessions to educate stakeholders on priority access policies and enrolment processes, including priority of access for Aboriginal children from Moama, across the border in NSW, to Victorian kindergartens - as per Department guidelines.

In parallel, outreach programs, including family interviews, SMS campaigns, and educational sessions, were conducted to prepare families for kindergarten and school. Successful advertising campaigns and outreach efforts were implemented to improve awareness of Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) and priority access. Collaboration with other departments centralised enrolment processes for Aboriginal families. Assistance in preparing enrolment documents was provided to kindergartens in collaboration with the Shire, facilitating smoother registration processes.

The initiative achieved an 85% increase in first-round kindergarten offers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in 2023. It also enabled smoother enrolment processes through collaborations and community upskilling initiatives regarding kindergarten and school readiness.





CASE STUDY 9

Monitoring vulnerability among children and families, and responding in real-time to support ongoing kindergarten engagement

Region: Greater Shepparton City Council



Challenge

- Increase in vulnerable families requiring additional support since 2022 floods.



Actions

- Implementation of the Child and Family Vulnerability Tool by Maternal and Child Health and kindergarten services to identify a rise in vulnerable families.
- Linking of identified children and families with necessary services to ensure their health and wellbeing needs were met.



Results

- Proactive identification and support of vulnerable families to ensure health and wellbeing needs are met for children and families.



Partners

- Maternal and Child Health services; kindergarten services; early years and family services.

Best Start Shepparton, initiated 20 years ago, has maintained a strong rapport with services and the community. These relationships proved invaluable in times of disasters like the 2022 floods. In 2011, Best Start Shepparton developed and supported the use of the Child and Family Vulnerability Tool among services, which enables the identification of children and families requiring additional support.

Now used as part of everyday practice by MCH and kindergarten services, the Child and Family Vulnerability tool identified a rise the number of families experiencing vulnerability following the 2022 floods. The children and families proactively identified through the tool were subsequently linked with necessary services to ensure their health and wellbeing needs were met, which, in turn, supported their ongoing attendance at kindergarten.





4. Complex registration and enrolment processes

Navigating complex kindergarten registration and enrolment processes requires targeted, tailored and timely solutions to ensure families receive the help required to enrol their children.

CASE STUDY 10

Facilitating timely kindergarten registration and enrolment

Region: Greater Shepparton City Council



Challenge

- Complex central registration process for kindergarten posing a barrier to registration and enrolment for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families.



Actions

- Identification of an historical trend of late submission of kindergarten registration forms by CALD families.
- Setup of outreach kindergarten registration tables at high-traffic areas frequented by CALD families, such as community hubs, supermarkets, educational institutions, and service centres.
- Tailoring of information sessions to specific language cohorts to ensure effective communication and offering tailored support across registration and enrolment process.



Results

- 200% rise in 3-year-old registrations across specific services in South Shepparton compared to the previous year.
- 50% increase in the number of Letters of Offer completed on time across three kindergartens in South Shepparton.
- 800% surge in kinder enrolment forms (for 3 and 4-year-old kindergarten) completed by Greater Shepparton's City Council.



Partners

- Community hubs; supermarkets; educational institutions (e.g., GOTAFE); service centres; community support leaders; bilingual workers; outreach officers; kindergarten service.

Greater Shepparton City Council operates a central registration process for kindergarten, consisting of three main steps: registration of interest, acceptance of offers and completion of enrolment forms. The complexity of this process is recognised as a barrier to kindergarten registration and enrolment, particularly for families from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

The initiative began by capturing local data through community consultations and analysis, revealing that CALD families historically submit their kindergarten registration form late, which can affect their ability to gain a place at the kinder closest to where they live. Often families rely on walking or public transport, and face challenges



attending their assigned program if not offered a place at their preferred kindergarten. To address this, outreach kindergarten registration tables were set up at various high-traffic areas frequented by CALD families, such as community hubs, supermarkets, educational institutions like GOTAFE, and service centres. Community support leaders were also engaged to drive active engagement and promotion of registrations across these spaces.

Continued language and cultural support were provided through bilingual workers and outreach officers who assisted CALD families throughout the registration process. Information sessions were tailored to specific language cohorts to ensure effective communication. Ongoing support was also offered, including direct form completion assistance, follow-up reminders of deadlines, and continuous linkage with kindergarten services.

The results of these efforts were substantial, with around 40 families registering for kindergarten through support sessions held at community locations. Notably, there was a significant increase in registrations completed by the first cutoff date, with a 200% rise in 3-year-old registrations across specific services in South Shepparton compared to the previous year. Moreover, there was a 50% increase in the number of Letters of Offer completed on time across three kindergartens in South Shepparton, and a remarkable 800% surge in kinder enrolment forms (for 3- and 4-year-old kindergarten) completed by Greater Shepparton City Council's transition day in December, reflecting the effectiveness of the outreach and support initiatives in facilitating timely registration and enrolment for CALD families.

Using the learnings from Best Start

Across these case studies, a range of approaches have been used to respond to barriers to kindergarten participation commonly experienced by families.

Prioritising deep listening and self-determination

Initiatives like modifying structures and practices to prioritise deep listening, shared decision-making and self-determination - as seen in Darebin Best Start - can lead to highly engaged and active groups within communities. By involving local Elders and leaders, community partners can identify and address barriers effectively, leading to increased participation in early childhood programs.

Building strong relationships and capacity with service providers

Developing deep relationships between Best Start and kindergarten services as has been done in Tartu-nganyin Bopop, can enhance cultural safety within services. Regular visits, cultural awareness audits and collaborative projects involving local artists and educators contribute to building confidence and capacity among service providers have lead to sustainable improvements in cultural safety.

Cultural competency training and immersive experiences

Embedding cultural safety practices within services requires enhancing cultural competency among staff. Using existing resources and leveraging partnerships - as done in Yarra Ranges and Bass Coast and South Gippsland Shires - can facilitate immersive experiences and training sessions to promote and practice cultural safety effectively.

Place-focused outreach and community cohort engagement and solutions

Concentrating resources to develop place-focused solutions - as demonstrated in Hume City Council, Wyndham City Council and Greater Shepparton City Council - can significantly improve engagement with CALD families. Targeted outreach efforts in specific neighbourhoods, along with community cohort engagement strategies, facilitate trust-building and increase access to early years services.



Using technology for CALD outreach

Harnessing technology can improve outreach and knowledge dissemination among CALD families, as seen in Mildura. Using translation apps, personalised reminders and multilingual materials can effectively engage diverse language groups and facilitate enrolment processes, leading to increased participation in kindergarten programs.

Collaborative approaches to address complex adversities

Addressing complex adversities requires collaborative approaches and leveraging existing networks. Initiatives like defining priority of access policies, using Best Start tools and activating long-standing networks - as shown in Njernda Aboriginal Corporation and Shepparton case studies - can facilitate smoother enrolment processes and support vulnerable families effectively.

By taking the time to identify barriers to participation, services have been able to work in partnership to devise and test strategies to respond to local issues and concerns. Their key learnings emphasise the importance of community engagement, capacity building, cultural competency, targeted outreach, technological innovation, and collaborative approaches in improving access and participation in early years services within diverse communities. The challenges experienced are not unique to Best Start sites. Other communities are encouraged to consider trialling these approaches in their community.

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The Promising Practice series

The *Promising Practice in Best Start* series captures what is being learnt through Best Start about how to use quality improvement to increase participation in early years services. The series draws on insights from Best Start facilitators and is produced by the Centre for Community Child Health.

About Best Start

Best Start is a Victorian Department of Education and Training place-based early years initiative focused on increasing participation in key early years services, particularly for children experiencing vulnerability and Aboriginal children. There are 30 Best Start project sites across Victoria, six of which work specifically with local Aboriginal communities. The Centre for Community Child Health has been working alongside Best Start since 2016 to support the initiative's implementation of a quality improvement approach.

For more information visit: *Supporting Best Start*.

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The Centre for Community Child Health acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work and pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging.



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