# Community Strengthening Program Logic

|  Current Situation | Evidence | ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES  | Outputs | Theory of Change | client Outcomes |
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| Target group: children, young people, families and communities in particular:* Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities;
* 0-5 year olds;
* Children and young people at risk of disengagement from school, family and community;
* Young parents with known vulnerabilities or who are experiencing a number of hardships.
* Children and young people affected by a mental health condition/s.

Vulnerable children, young people, families and communities experience a number of challenges, which can be compounded by lack of support services and community infrastructure. Further, over the past few years, communities have been impacted by floods, bushfires, COVID-19 and cost of living increases.In 2021, the national percentage of children developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains increased from 21.7 per cent in 2018 to 22.0 per cent in 2021. The percentage of children who were developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains also increased from 11.0 per cent in 2018 to 11.4 per cent in 2021[[1]](#footnote-2).Social isolation and loneliness are among many factors that can be detrimental to a person’s wellbeing. An increasing number of people aged 15–24, especially females, have reported experiencing loneliness since 2012. Social isolation has been increasing across all age groups for decades.[[2]](#footnote-3)Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s strong connection to family, land, language and culture forms the foundation for social, economic and individual wellbeing. This is integral to efforts to close the gap[[3]](#footnote-4).A 2023 report mapping disadvantage in NSW estimates in 2021- 22 there were more than 995,000 people in NSW living with significant economic disadvantage – below the poverty line[[4]](#footnote-5). Other challenges include mental health, domestic violence, high unemployment rates and LGAs with low socio-economic ranking on the SEIFA index[[5]](#footnote-6). If these issues are not addressed, disadvantage in communities is expected to become further entrenched. Children in these families are likely to be negatively impacted which may result in poor developmental, educational and social outcomes.Community development has positive outcomes for children, young people and families. This includes increasing: * parenting skills;
* parental confidence;
* self-awareness and confidence;
* visits to health professionals and other services;
* knowledge and understanding of money management;
* employment;
* re-engagement with education[[6]](#footnote-7).

Community development has also been shown to decrease: * injury and suicide rates;
* low literacy levels;
* alcohol related hospitalisation;
* crime rates[[7]](#footnote-8).
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 | Strong community wellbeing is critically important for helping children, young people and families thrive, especially when they are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, vulnerability. [Five critical elements](https://evidenceportal.dcj.nsw.gov.au/content/dcj/evidenceportal/evidence-portal-home/our-evidence-reviews/community-strengthening-evidence-review/community-strengthening-critical-elements.html) are common across the evidence that contribute to increased community wellbeing for vulnerable children, young people and families:1. **Inclusive and genuine codesign and partnership**: building authentic partnerships with community that work towards community ownership while also ensuring that the diverse voices of that community are represented.
2. **Leveraging strengths and building capacity**: initiatives that are both strengths based and actively building community capacity.
3. **Creating safe and effective spaces**: spaces that are safe and accessible to everyone to allow for the effective engagement of diverse community members.
4. **Intersectional and safe approaches**: incorporating an understanding of how the different aspects of a person's identity (e.g. gender, ethnicity, disability) can expose them to overlapping and intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalisation to allow for the delivery of a more integrated, safe and holistic suite of services.
5. **A whole system approach**: interventions that are part of a whole system approach that interconnects multiple community cohorts and agencies.

(DCJ Evidence Portal: Community Strengthening Evidence Review).The [5th critical element](https://evidenceportal.dcj.nsw.gov.au/evidence-portal-home/our-evidence-reviews/community-strengthening-evidence-review/community-strengthening-critical-elements.html) also provides evidence supporting community sector coordination activities.A synthesis of elements of best practice in youth work include:* connectivity: development of programs and services that are long term, sustainable and relationship based, birthed and sourced from within the community
* strengths-based approach: embracing notions of independence and autonomy among services for young people
* capacity building: ability to build capacity in terms of staff professional development, effective research, evaluation and information gathering and sharing, and leadership in the area of governance and management
* contextual and systemic considerations: consideration of macro-contexts including economic, political and social and cultural factors.

(DCJ Evidence Portal: [Agency and Empowerment Evidence Review](https://evidenceportal.dcj.nsw.gov.au/evidence-portal-home/our-evidence-reviews/youth-work-agency-and-empowerment-evidence-review.html)) | The Community Strengthening program activity encompasses activities aimed at facilitating greater community cohesion, inclusion and wellbeing, and empowerment of Aboriginal communities. Community strengthening activities seek to maximise social engagement, as well as provide social supports to ensure greater opportunities for both individuals and families within the community, as well as the community as a whole, through:* Advocacy and support
* Community engagement
* Community sector coordination
* Education and skills training
* Facilitating employment pathways
* Information, advice and referral
* Indigenous advocacy/support
* Indigenous community engagement
* Indigenous healing activities
* Social participation
 | As per contracted deliverables. | The evidence shows that the following critical elements have a positive impact on community wellbeing outcomes: 1. Inclusive and genuine codesign and partnership
2. Leveraging strengths and building capacity
3. Creating safe and effective spaces
4. Intersectional and safe approaches
5. A whole system approach

Community wellbeing is a collective sense of belonging, participation, trust, and access to resources and services that allow individuals and their communities to flourish and fulfil their potential. Community can be critically important for helping children, young people and families thrive, especially when they are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, vulnerability. To thrive, children and young people need protective factors such as relationships with supportive adults, safe environments and places to play, and high-quality social, emotional and educational learning experiences.The presence of more than one protective factor can reduce risks to a child’s development and life outcomes. By focusing on community wellbeing, services can help achieve positive outcomes for children, young people and families by reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors within the community.Community engagement and development approaches occurring as a relational process at a local level are effective at improving outcomes for children, young people, families and communities.**Community Sector Coordination** System level initiatives that promote comprehensive, protective and preventative support are key to achieving enduring change. | **Social and Community*** increased participation in community events
* increased sense of belonging to their community
* increase in formal and informal networks

**Empowerment*** increased client reported self-determination

**Education and Skills*** increased school attendance and achievement

**Economic*** sustained participation in employment

**Safety*** reduced risk of entry into the child protection system

**Health*** improved health of children and young people
* improved parental health

**Home*** sustained safe and stable housing

**Service System Outcomes*** strengths-based approach
* flexible and responsive
* culturally safe
* capable
* collaborative
* person centred
* evidence informed.
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1. Australian Early Development Census (2022), Findings from the AEDC, Available at: https://www.aedc.gov.au/early-childhood/findings-from-the-aedc [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2023) Australia’s welfare 2023 data insights, catalogue number AUS 246, AIHW, Australian Government. Available at: https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/australias-welfare-2023-data-insights/contents/social-isolation-loneliness-and-wellbeing [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. National Indigenous Australians Agency, Culture. Available at: https://www.niaa.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/culture-and-capability#introduction [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. NSW Council of Social Services (2023) Mapping Economic Disadvantage in New South Wales, Available at: https://www.ncoss.org.au/policy-advocacy/policy-research-publications/mapping-economic-disadvantage-in-nsw/ [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia, viewed April 2023. Available at: https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/socio-economic-indexes-areas-seifa-australia/latest-release [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Snijder, M. 2017. ‘Maldahnalanga: Integrating rigorous research and community participation in Aboriginal community-based research’, PhD thesis, NDARC. University of New South Wales, Sydney NSW [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)