

# RESTACKING THE ODDS

## RSTO IN ACTION

Improving early childhood education and care attendance



RSTO in action uses hypothetical scenarios to showcase how RSTO partnerships—with services and communities—can drive meaningful change in service provision. These scenarios are informed by real challenges, opportunities and Restacking the Odds (RSTO) partnerships.

Each scenario illustrates how a service provider in antenatal care, parenting programs or early childhood education and care (ECEC) have used the RSTO indicators to improve their practices and optimise the benefits for children and families.

### SCENARIO

RSTO's collaboration with an early childhood education and care (ECEC) provider reveals that children experiencing disadvantage are less likely to attend ECEC, and that some centre's are experiencing low participation. Using RSTO's data platform and Learning Action System, the service provider can implement solutions to address barriers and enhance participation.

**Service focus:**

**Early Childhood Education and Care**

**RSTO indicator focus:**

Quality, quantity and **participation**

## The service partner

The ECEC provider located in Sydney has four centres situated across two NSW Local Government Areas (LGAs), offering both long day care services and kindergarten.

## The challenge

The service provider collects a large amount of data, including, enrolment, attendance and wellbeing data, and quality service data in line with the National Quality Framework. All data being collected is housed across various platforms. The service provider was interested in understanding the patterns of attendance across and within their centres. They were particularly interested in how children's attendance aligned with the evidence base, how it differs across centres and how the providers' centres compared to other centres in similar communities.

## Using RSTO indicators to uncover low participation in ECEC

The RSTO team was introduced to the ECEC provider at a forum held by a local community initiative working in the provider's LGA. Initially, RSTO engaged closely with the service provider to better understand the service provider's data and systems.

The team identified that the data was mostly used by the Chief Financial Officer for data compliance reporting. As data was housed across multiple systems, data collection and reporting were manual and very time-consuming processes.

The first step was to work with the team to develop processes to extract de-identified data into the RSTO platform and to begin data analysis and reporting. Initially, data from the last six months was piped into the RSTO platform.

The RSTO team then worked with the service provider to build the team's capabilities in interpreting and using data to drive action. The data suggested that, on average, participation in two of the three centres was on target. However, one centre was not meeting participation targets. Additionally, when data was broken down into population cohorts, the attendance of children from priority groups<sup>1</sup> was not in line with best practice.

## Addressing barriers to improve ECEC attendance

The RSTO team worked with centre leaders and managers to understand the possible reasons why attendance might be lower at one centre compared to the others, and why attendance for children from priority populations was lower. These consultations suggested that several factors could be contributing to low attendance, particularly for children and families experiencing disadvantage.

Some factors were related to cost, the location of the centres, information about the curriculum, and a lack of awareness of the benefits of regular and consistent participation in ECEC.

By understanding attendance issues, gaps and barriers, the service provider was able to implement strategies to reduce barriers to attending ECEC. For example, a series of promotional efforts through diverse communication channels helped to raise awareness of the benefits of attending high-quality ECEC. This activity has seen measurable increases in ECEC participation.

1 The term 'priority groups' refers to populations who may experience greater susceptibility to adverse health or learning outcomes as a result of structural inequities. Priority groups include: pregnant women under 18 years of age, refugees or asylum seeker populations, disability populations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, Health Care Card holders, children in out-of-home care, and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) populations.

## Ongoing use of the Restacking framework

The service provider now routinely collects data through the RSTO platform and has built a regular practice with their team of reviewing the data, identifying gaps and opportunities, and testing ideas to improve the results. The service provider has also been able to engage with the RSTO Community of Practice to learn how other ECEC service providers addressed similar challenges.



### Interested in partnering with RSTO?

Learn about opportunities to engage with the project at [www.rsto.org.au/partnering-with-rsto/](http://www.rsto.org.au/partnering-with-rsto/)

## RESTACKING THE ODDS

RSTO is a collaboration between the Centre for Community Child Health at Murdoch Children's Research Institute, Bain & Company, and Social Ventures Australia.

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*We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work and pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging.*