

# RESTACKING THE ODDS

## SHARED DECISION MAKING: SUPPORTING BETTER OUTCOMES FOR LOGAN'S CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



Access to quality early years services helps to ensure that children can fulfil their potential. Logan – one of Australia’s fastest-growing cities – is taking action to drive continuous improvement in five foundational early years services.

### The opportunity

Despite significant Government and philanthropic investment in the early years, according to the latest Australian Early Development Census, only 45% of Logan's 46,000 children start school developmentally on track.

In partnership with Restacking the Odds (RSTO), Logan Together is implementing RSTO to support their goal of ensuring all children in Logan are happy, healthy and thriving. The aim is to build evidence for learning and decision-making across early years services to reduce inequity and improve children's health, development and wellbeing in the region.

### CASE STUDY

RSTO is partnering with Logan Together to establish shared measurement and decision-making for continuous improvement across five foundational early years services.

**Service focus:**  
Stacking strategies

**RSTO lead indicator focus:**  
Quality, quantity and participation

RSTO's standardised evidence-based lead indicators provide timely and actionable information on the quality, quantity and participation in early years services. Using this information, Logan Together is striving to enable all children and families to access a combination of high-quality early years services.

## The approach

To support implementation, Logan Together and RSTO initially invested in a full-time local resource – a systems and practice manager. They provided the expertise required to connect organisations, build relationships with community services and stakeholders, and understand the existing challenges and opportunities to develop an RSTO integrated implementation plan. Key elements of the plan included:

- building awareness of what evidence is required to support shared decision making across the early years service system
- mapping the existing early years service system from the perspective of children and families to highlight connections between services and identify data requirements
- co-designing a shared decision-making framework.

### Addressing the evidence gap

A significant barrier to equitable service delivery in Logan was the lack of timely and relevant data to inform action. There was a lot of population level data and community insights collected, but this alone was not enough for informing change. The community realised that service level data (also referred to as lead indicator data) was also necessary for identifying what needed to change and prioritising action and investment.

RSTO focuses on how to use evidence for better outcomes for children, families and communities. RSTO's lead indicator framework contextualised essential service-level data from Logan partners. When this was combined with community voice and population data, it provided a sound evidence base for shared decision making and action to reduce inequities in early childhood (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Types of data

### Advancing systems thinking

Creating a map of the existing service system was key to identifying opportunities for improving outcomes for children in Logan and the type of data needed to inform timely decisions. This required understanding the personal experiences of children and families, and the pathways between services. The process of developing the systems map allowed contributors to plot the existing and missing data, and consider the role of lead indicators. In the Logan community of Yarrabilba for example, the systems map produced a detailed picture of the early childhood development system. Beyond mapping the data requirements, the systems map allowed service providers and practitioners to see past their individual services to identify relationships and opportunities to connect and strengthen the system.

*The systems mapping through the eyes of the mother and her child is enlightening and powerful and has become the basis of our service level response within each focus community. I suspect this systems mapping should become a foundational and early piece of work for like-initiatives across Australia.*

Dr Michelle Lucas, Executive Director,  
Logan Together

## Shared decision-making framework

Co-design is central to RSTO's approach. RSTO's systems and practice manager – who is co-located in Logan – works closely with local stakeholders to facilitate relationships in the early years sector. In partnership with the community and service providers, a shared decision-making framework emerged (Figure 2). The framework illustrates how RSTO data (service-level, population and community) is exchanged, analysed and interpreted to support collective action:

- **Knowledge exchange** describes the way data (population outcomes, community voice and service-level) is shared for the purpose of learning in Logan.
- Communities, services and government in Logan are **learning together**. They are building their data literacy skills and a shared understanding of the local system.
- Knowledge exchange and learning together enables **taking action together**. The knowledge, evidence and insights inform the co-design process, allowing stakeholders to identify system-wide inequities in the early years and implement local solutions within the existing service infrastructure.

*Putting the community at the centre of decision-making isn't easy. It requires a deliberate shift in power, where conditions are built slowly through authentic and open relationships, changed mind sets, practices, policies, processes, structures, and systems.*

Sherena Zanus, Systems and Practice Manager, RSTO

## Learnings

A collective place-based response that addresses the complex issues facing children and families requires an integrated strategy. Communities, government and services need to be prepared to work together to build the skills necessary to take action. The partnership between Logan Together and RSTO has provided key insights into how to support the implementation of evidence-based lead indicators in communities.



**Readiness.** Communities, services and government are likely to need support to understand the underlying issues facing children and families, and to identify the data, skills and capacity necessary to take action.



**Knowledge and skills.** New ways of working together can be challenging. While collectively there may be considerable knowledge, assets and skills, it is often necessary to build capability for using data. This requires developing data literacy - understanding what data to collect and how to interpret, analyse and effectively use the data.



**Resourcing collaboration and implementation.** Shared decision making relies on trust and collaboration. Logan Together collaborates with over 100 partners spanning community, service providers and government. Investing time in building and sustaining relationships across the early years service system is critical to shared decision making. Having dedicated resources – such as a systems and



Figure 2: Shared decision-making framework

practice manager – is an often overlooked but essential role. It provides service system expertise and enables the engagement critical for tackling implementation challenges and fuelling action.



**Working together.** Building a mutual understanding and a shared approach requires adaptability and learning to work together. For example, the RSTO term ‘evidence-informed lead indicators’ was changed to ‘service-level data’ which better illustrated for partners how RSTO contributes important evidence to shared measurement and decision making.

## Looking ahead

In 2024, RSTO will continue to partner with Logan Together to focus on:

- working in partnership to embed RSTO lead indicators and continuous improvement practices across the early child development system, starting initially with Maternal and Child Health Hubs across Logan
- building collective knowledge on 'what works' for priority groups, contributing to Logan Together’s monitoring and evaluation plan
- contributing to the state and national discussion on the mechanisms of shared measurement and decision-making in place.



Image courtesy of Logan Together

Find out more about RSTO at [www.rsto.org.au](http://www.rsto.org.au)

## 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.*