



the common approach

A practical approach to improving the wellbeing of children and families



ARACY

Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth
Collaboration • Evidence • Prevention

Originally funded by the Australian Government under the
National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020.



ARACY – the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth

ARACY works to improve the wellbeing of children and young people up to age 24 by helping to **turn evidence into policy and practice**. We work in close collaboration with other not-for-profit organisations, Australian and State Government departments, educators, communities, and child, family, and youth workers.

ARACY helps organisations achieve their goals in improving the lives of children and young people by sharing evidence of what works, brokering opportunities, and connecting policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and individuals who work to make a difference.

A membership organisation

ARACY members have unique opportunities to network, share ideas, and collaborate with other professionals working in child and youth wellbeing.

Individual and organisational membership types are available.

Call on 02 6248 2400 or visit aracy.org.au to learn more.

The Common Approach

The Common Approach is a flexible way of working to help everyone have quality conversations with young people and their families about all aspects of their wellbeing. It encourages and supports those working with children, young people, and families to:

- place the wellbeing of children and young people at the centre of their work
- take a holistic view of the family's circumstances
- identify strengths to assist with areas of need
- work in partnership with families and other professionals.

The Common Approach is supported by a suite of resources that facilitates conversations with families by providing prompts and guidance. It is designed with flexibility to meet the preferences, needs, and circumstances of families, service providers, and community organisations. The Common Approach is not a standardised risk assessment tool, but rather a simple, versatile way of working that enables child-led and child-focused discussion across all areas of wellbeing.

Why is the Common Approach so important?

The Common Approach was initially funded by the Australian Government under *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020*.

The Common Approach supports those who work with children, young people, and their families by providing a consistent, empowering, and positive experience during their interactions.

Having a Common Approach conversation can help to:

- identify and verify early signs that a child or family needs support
- assist individuals to think holistically about the strengths and needs of the child and family
- increase everyone's awareness of their role in the prevention of abuse and neglect
- decrease the time needed to discover the causes of problematic behaviour
- facilitate open communications between family members, service providers, and young people
- assist in the provision of early, strengths-based support to children and families, before problems escalate into crises.

Is the Common Approach effective?

An independent, formative evaluation by the Social Policy Research Centre (University of New South Wales) found that the Common Approach helped:

- increase the number of service providers making earlier identification of needs among children and families
- increase service providers' ability to identify family strengths and needs, including those outside an individual's core areas of expertise
- better understand what supports are available and potential benefit of support pathways for children, young people, and their families
- increase awareness of working in a preventative and child-centred way
- improve relationships between families and services.

How is the Common Approach being used?

The Common Approach is currently being implemented across education, health, allied health, community, and social service organisations throughout Australia; government and non-government.

Anyone who has anything to do with children, young people, or families can use the Common Approach—from the school principal to the netball coach and every community member in between. It is helpful when:

- preparing for conversations with a child or family
- having conversations, as a structure or guiding framework
- developing next steps, action plans, and priorities with the child, young person, or family
- following conversations in order to support, record, or remind people of discussions
- sharing case information with colleagues
- supporting outcomes and checking progress.



The Common Approach Resources



Wellbeing Wheels

A detailed Wellbeing Wheel and a simplified Wellbeing Wheel facilitate discussions about the different areas of wellbeing in a child or young person's life. The Wheels help to record a family's strengths, needs, and agreed next steps.

Practitioner Wheel

This is a Wellbeing Wheel with prompts and example questions in each of the wellbeing areas that support individuals to lead broad conversations with children, young people, and their parents or carers.



Question Booklets

The Question Booklets are two sets of simply-worded and visually engaging questions—one for young people and one for parents and carers. They are designed to facilitate thought and discussion. The questions help families to identify their strengths and needs across the Common Approach's six areas of wellbeing.



The Common Approach Guide

The Guide is a general reference tool for anyone using the Common Approach. It provides detailed information regarding the development, evidence, and use of the Common Approach, including case studies.

Poster

An A3 poster showing the detailed Wellbeing Wheel which can be displayed in places such as waiting rooms, school hallways, clinics, and family and community centres.

Informed by extensive research

The Common Approach aligns with research from *The Nest*, an action agenda based on consultations with researchers, community groups, parents, educators, and more than 4,000 young people. *The Nest* focuses the efforts of those working with children and youth, identifies the outcomes we want for children, and how we can best align our efforts to achieve them.

The Nest, like the Common Approach, aims for all children to be Loved and Safe, Healthy, Learning, Participating, have Material Basics, and a Positive Sense of Identity and Culture.

How can I adopt the Common Approach?

Training is required to adopt the Common Approach and to access the Common Approach Resources. ARACY has delivered training to communities across Australia. Participants often include community leaders, government representatives, NGO workers, and service providers who interact with children, young people, and families.

In addition to the standard training, there is a Trainer Program where individuals can become ARACY-endorsed Common Approach Trainers. Please contact ARACY if you would like to discuss this further.

Need more information? Contact us at ARACY:

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