



Working with Preschools

Information for Therapists

It is important for visiting therapists and educators to establish strong communication to enable the development of a mutual understanding of how each preschool operates and how therapy visits may occur in a complimentary and inclusive way.

Benefits of inclusion and the role of preschool

Research and experience tell us that inclusive early childhood education leads to the best outcomes for all children and families. The primary role of preschools is to provide education that is inclusive and aimed at enabling children with disabilities to participate on the same basis as their peers. Adjustments to the environment and teaching strategies are therefore vital and are aimed towards enabling all children to access and participate in all educational experiences.

While working collaboratively on goals and strategies to support a child's participation is important, therapy provision is not the role of the educator.

Inclusion and Learning in Preschools

Preschools provide a unique opportunity for children to play, develop and learn together with their peers. These relationships are the foundations for learning and provide a powerful way of belonging to a group and developing a sense of who they are.

Preschool environments are designed to facilitate and maximise these opportunities through a play-based curriculum, with the expertise of educators who are trained to assess children's learning and development within the social context of the service.

Early childhood settings have their own curriculum and legal obligations for the education and care of all children

in the form of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and National Quality Framework which includes the National Quality Standard (NQS).

Every child's right to inclusion is underpinned by all quality areas of the National Quality Standard which all early childhood services need to meet.

Educators' knowledge and skills

Educators are well placed to share their knowledge of children's learning, interests and social connections within the everyday context of the service with therapists.

Educators have a strong working knowledge of child development and are aware of barriers to participation that may be impacting on children's inclusion at the service.

It can be helpful for educators to tell therapists about their service's philosophy around inclusive practice and the everyday routines and learning experiences offered to all children.

Educators can let therapists know about any areas they would like support with and when it would be most helpful for visits from therapists to occur. It is important to be mindful that educators are responsible for the education and care of a large group of children.



Therapist Visits to Preschools

It is important for any strategies to be determined collaboratively and focus upon enhancing the child's participation and access to the preschool.

Any strategies agreed on need to be able to be readily embedded in the preschool's everyday program.

Visits from therapists should involve working with the child in the social context with their peers rather than on a 1:1 basis.

There may be some therapy goals and strategies that are more relevant and suitable to a family or community context rather than the preschool setting.

It is important to be aware that often there are multiple therapists seeking to visit the preschool setting and educators need to ensure that this doesn't impact on curriculum provisions and opportunities for uninterrupted play with peers.

Working together

Preschools may ask families and therapists to set up a Working Together Agreement when visits are planned in a preschool setting. This can be helpful in order to establish roles, responsibilities and to outline the best way for therapy visits to occur at the preschool.

The agreement supports best practice and planning as a team. Information about the Working Together Agreement is available here: <https://www.flipsnack.com/earlychildhoodintervention/ecia-working-together-toolkit/full-view.html>

Reference: NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency
What Therapists Need to Know Fact Sheet

The Sector Capacity Building Program, funded by the NSW Department of Education, supports educators in community based preschools with increasing their capacity to include children with disabilities on the same basis as their peers.

KU Children's Services is the provider of this program for allocated preschools in the Sydney Inner West and Eastern Suburbs, Penrith and Hawkesbury and Illawarra regions.

For more information see kudisabilityinclusion.com.au

