



# What Therapists Need to Know

## Inclusion in early childhood education and care

### Benefits of inclusion

Research and experience tell us that inclusive early childhood education leads to the best outcomes for all children and families.

### What happens in early childhood education and care (ECEC)?

It is important for therapists who visit ECEC settings to learn about how each setting operates in order to work together in a way that is complementary.

Inclusive children's services 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.

ECEC 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 ECEC services need to meet.

NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency



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## 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 ECEC settings

It is important for any strategies to be determined collaboratively and focus upon enhancing the child's participation and access to the ECEC setting. Any strategies agreed on need to be able to be readily embedded in the ECEC'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 ECEC setting.

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

## Working together

ECEC services may ask families and therapists to set up a Working Together Agreement when visits are planned in an ECEC setting. This can be helpful in order to establish roles, responsibilities and to clarify the way in which a therapist's visit to inclusive ECEC services occur. 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>

The NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency (IA), managed by KU Children's Services, in partnership with Include Me and Gowrie NSW, is part of the Inclusion Support Program. The program aims to build the capacity and capability of educators to address participation barriers for all children through implementing quality inclusive practices.

For more information, visit: [inclusionagency NSWACT.org.au](http://inclusionagency NSWACT.org.au) or call **1800 703 382**

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

*The Australian Government funded Inclusion Agency is managed by KU Children's Services, in partnership with Include Me and Gowrie NSW.*