

Key worker model

What is a key worker?

A key worker brings together your child's therapeutic interventions into one key or primary worker. The key worker focuses on working with significant adults in the child's life, imparting information, knowledge and skills to them by using coaching and consultation rather than only direct therapy with the child. The key worker focuses on the child's natural learning environments using the child's daily routines and activities to promote the child's development and participation rather than working with the child solely in a clinical setting.

"...children's first and most enduring educators are their families. Families provide the caring relationships, the models, the opportunities and the experiences shaping children's learning and development"

(the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (2009))

We know that children learn through exploration and practice and they learn the most from those that they have the deepest relationships and spend the most time with- their families and carers. Key workers work through strong and positive relationships with their families to support and optimise the development of children with additional needs.

Your key worker aims to:

- Help you build your child's skills
- Help childcare and kindergarten build your child's skills
- Make sure you have resources and support
- Support your family to know your rights
- Support your family to be more confident
- Support your family to do things you want to do

Your key worker will:

- Listen to you and your family
- Give you information and advice
- Get advice from their team
- Make a plan with you
- Visit you at home, or wherever is easiest for you
- Visit your child at childcare, kindergarten or school
- Teach you how to help your child learn
- If needed, get someone else from the team to visit
- Support you when you need it

Your key worker will be:

- A qualified occupational therapist, speech pathologist, physiotherapist or educational advisor
- Part of a team
- The main or only contact you have on the team

Why choose a key worker?

The National Guidelines for Best Practice in Early Childhood Intervention of ECIA (Early Childhood Intervention Australia) recommends the use of the key worker model.

The key worker can help a family understand their child's situation, cut through the jargon, navigate services and make sense of new information. When parents and carers are supported, resourced and motivated they are better able to meet their family's needs, including a child's additional needs, both in the present and in preparing for the future.

The key worker model involves one early childhood intervention professional becoming the primary point of contact for a family. A key component of this role is using family centred and strengths based approaches which support families to be in control of their situation. The role focuses on five key areas that have been identified as important for families:

- Emotional support from family, friends and professionals
- Information and advice which enables them to navigate services, understand professional terminology and access resources
- Opportunities to identify and address their needs in parenting a child with a disability
- Support and developing skills in advocating for the needs of their child and family
- Support in coordinating their services

The transdisciplinary key worker role focuses on (in addition to those components of the key worker model) on families having:

- Holistic family services and support plans
- Integrated approaches for promoting their child's development as part of daily life or routines
- Close working relationships between staff in children's services who work with the child and one early childhood intervention professional who knows the child and family well
- The opportunity to call in other professional disciplines when required

We recognize that we will be but a small part of your child's life and we will work with you to build your skills, knowledge and confidence to manage more and more independently into the future.