

IMPLEMENTATION OF A WHOLE SERVICE INNOVATION APPROACH TO SUPPORT WORKFORCE DIVERSITY



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INTRODUCTION

In the early childhood support sector, a shortage of experienced practitioners leads to long waitlists and limited access to timely services for children and families.

Early childhood teachers were traditionally involved in early childhood intervention but many left with the NDIS launch.

Adapting services based on feedback can enhance practitioner onboarding and retention, improving participant service access.

AIM

The approach aimed to use feedback from current and exiting practitioners to design and implement targeted, evidence-based service adjustments over three months.

By aligning evidence based practices with this feedback, we aimed to support team onboarding and retention by enhancing knowledge and confidence, and streamlining processes.

This helps the evidence-based key worker service grow sustainably while improving service access.

METHOD

A range of methods were used to support the design and implementation of service adjustments including:

Exploration and adoption

- Practitioner surveys
- Exiting practitioner surveys
- Review of participant feedback
- Manager feedback
- Participant Advisory Group review of model
- Referrers review of model
- Literature review
- Operational data

Project implementation

- Project methodology – with development of an Early Childhood Supports Project team
- Early Childhood Supports(ECS) team structure realignment
- Development of resources and training

Initial implementation

- Information exchange through communities of practice, mentoring and knowledge resources
- Resource refinement based on practitioner feedback
- Practitioner surveys

RESULTS

Themes From Practitioner Exit Survey

Theme	Percentage
Confidence in role	26%
Career growth	11%
Communicating role	16%
Scheduling and administration	21%
Complexity of role	26%

Practitioners' feedback guided targeted service model adjustments beneficial for early childhood teachers and other practitioners.

Managers' feedback highlighted the need to manage complexity, build confidence in key worker roles, and schedule effectively. Families emphasized clear communication and confidence in team roles.

Positive responses were received from the Participant Advisory Group and referrers regarding the proposed changes.

Service Innovation Activities

Communicating Role	Confidence in Role	Career Growth	Scheduling and Administration	Complexity of Role
Adoption of "F-words" in childhood disability model	New ECS team and leadership structure including adjusted mentoring approach.	Clearer pathway from practitioner to Mentor to Advanced Therapy Mentor	New scheduling models and therapy planning process	Updated and simplified Key Worker training
Communication plan developed and implemented.	Dedicated consulting allied health professional supports.	New position descriptions	Clearer roles and responsibilities, with easier access to bookings for allied health professionals	"F-words" utilisation in resources
Communities of practice and mentoring sessions specific to the project changes	Easier to access resources themed around outcomes.	Recruitment for new roles - internal and external	Easier access to ECS specific Habit Coaches	Simplified documentation through child and family support plan and outcome report

Various strategies were implemented to enhance practitioners' communication, confidence, career prospects, scheduling, administrative tasks, and ability to manage complexity. Initial analysis shows improved onboarding of early childhood teacher team members, with more progressing through induction and fewer exiting.

This growth and stability positively impacted children and families, leading to an 83% increase in service access.

Wait List Change

Improved Retention

CONCLUSIONS

This project is part way through implementation. It is likely there will be further adjustments based on organisational need and to accommodate changes within the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The project has demonstrated that rapid adjustments across the whole of the service can occur can positively impact team member onboarding, retention and participant waitlists.

In a sector facing recruitment challenges, we've supported early childhood teachers join and stay in this vital workforce, significantly improving service access.

REFERENCES

The "F-Words" in childhood disability : I swear this is how we should think! Rosenbaum, P; Gorter, J.W. 2012 Child: Care, Health and Development

Knowledge translation strategies to support service providers implementation of the "F-words in Childhood Disability" Soper, A,k; Cross,a; Rosenbaum, P; Gorter, J.W; 2021 Disability and Rehabilitation

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was coordinated by the Early Childhood Supports Project team at Everyday Independence. Congratulations to all those involved including Leaders, Advanced Therapy Mentors and Mentors who brought it to life.

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