



# What Is a Key Worker?

## Understanding the Key Worker approach in Early Childhood Intervention



**In the Key Worker model, your Key Worker is your child's primary early intervention practitioner and main point of contact.**

A Key Worker works collaboratively with your child's broader team, bringing together professional knowledge, strategies and goals into a tailored, coordinated approach.

The Key Worker model supports children and families through **coordinated intervention, collaboration and capacity building**, with support embedded within the child's everyday environments.

## Why the Key Worker approach works

Evidence-informed early childhood intervention is grounded in approaches that are **individualised, family-centred, coordinated and connected to children's everyday experiences.**

The Key Worker model brings these principles together by providing a **tailored, timely and coordinated approach**, while supporting families to build knowledge, confidence and capacity to support their child's development **in daily life.**



This means intervention isn't just about what happens during a therapy session. It is about creating meaningful opportunities for children to **participate, learn and develop within the relationships, routines and settings that matter most to them.**



## What does a Key Worker do?

|                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Understand the whole child</b>                                     | <b>Identify meaningful goals</b>          | <b>Plan and deliver intervention</b>                    |
| Considering all areas of your child's development, while understanding how their strengths, interests, needs, relationships and participation connect. | Working with you to identify goals that are meaningful to your child and family.                                            | Developing and delivering individualised intervention based on your child's developmental needs, strengths and goals.                      |
| <b>Coordinate the team</b>                                            | <b>Support learning in everyday life</b>  | <b>Build family capacity</b>                            |
| Working alongside other professionals and bringing together their knowledge and expertise where appropriate.                                           | Embedding intervention within the places your child lives, plays and learns.                                                | Sharing knowledge, modelling strategies and working alongside parents and carers to build confidence and capacity beyond therapy sessions. |

## What makes an effective Key Worker?

### ♥ It's more than therapy alone

An effective Key Worker brings together professional knowledge, practical skills and strong relationships to support your child where they learn, play and develop.

**Effective Key Worker practice is about more than professional knowledge alone.** It combines professional knowledge and practical skills with the ability to build trusting, respectful, culturally responsive and collaborative relationships with children, families and other professionals.

A Key Worker brings **knowledge of child development, early intervention and inclusive practice**, along with skills in planning, problem-solving, advocacy, adapting support and coordinating intervention around each child's individual needs and goals.

**What distinguishes effective Key Worker practice is how this knowledge and expertise is used within relationships with children and families.** An effective Key Worker demonstrates empathy and compassion, active listening, open communication, flexibility and a non-judgemental approach. These qualities help families feel heard, understood and valued throughout the early intervention journey.

**Together, these qualities allow an effective Key Worker to turn professional knowledge into meaningful, individualised support for children and families.**



# What does this look like for your family?

## A Key Worker approach can help provide:

- ✓ One consistent point of contact
- ✓ A coordinated approach across your child's team
- ✓ Shared goals and priorities
- ✓ Individualised support tailored to your child's strengths, needs and goals
- ✓ Support embedded into everyday routines and environments
- ✓ Collaboration with educators and other professionals
- ✓ Practical strategies that build family confidence and capacity



***“But does my child still get specialist allied health therapy?”***

**Yes. A Key Worker is a skilled early intervention practitioner with their own professional expertise.**

Your Key Worker brings professional knowledge and expertise in child development, early intervention, developmental assessment, intervention planning and individualised support. They look at the whole child — considering how different areas of development, relationships, participation and experiences connect — rather than focusing on one skill or area in isolation. They use this knowledge to understand your child's strengths, needs and goals, plan and provide intervention, and adapt support as your child's development and priorities change.

The Key Worker also works collaboratively with allied health professionals such as Speech Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists and other professionals, drawing on their specialist expertise when needed.

The Key Worker helps bring together the knowledge and expertise of the broader team and translate it into a coordinated, meaningful and practical approach for your child and family.

*This resource has been informed by research conducted as part of a Master of Inclusive Education research project, examining the skills, knowledge and personal characteristics required for effective Early Childhood Intervention Key Workers.*