

INCLUSION NEWS
SPRING EDITION 2023

Gowrie

INCLUSION AGENCY TASMANIA



From Inclusion Agency Tasmania

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter, where we delve into the heart of our mission—to support educators, children and families in creating learning environments that honour every child's unique abilities and foster their growth, confidence, and independence. We explore the essence of inclusivity in early childhood and out of school hours education and care services and its profound impact on the development and well-being of all children.

Discover how the role of the additional educator plays a pivotal role in supporting inclusivity and equity in learning opportunities for all children in education and care settings. This information delves into their responsibilities, the significance of inclusive funding, and the importance of balanced engagement across the entire learning environment.

In this edition we feature two celebrations of practice, focusing on the role of the additional educator. We shed light on a pivotal aspect of the commitment and importance of the role of the additional educator when successfully implementing shared responsibilities within a strong and proactive team.

As Inclusion Professionals we recognize, champion and advocate for the principle that every child, regardless of their circumstances, possesses the inherent right to participate fully in an inclusive learning space. The words of the Early Years Learning Framework and My Time, Our Place resonate deeply with our ethos: "Welcoming, safe and inclusive indoor and outdoor learning environments reflect, respect, affirm the identities, and enrich the lives of children and families." Through this framework, we channel our commitment to coaching and supporting services to build environments that celebrate diversity and embrace the uniqueness of each child.

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Acknowledgement



Inclusion Agency Tasmania acknowledges with deep respect the Traditional Custodians of the many lands over which we work. We pay respect to elders past and present and recognise the continuing connection and contribution the palawa peoples make to this land, the water ways and our communities.

Role of the additional educator

The additional educator is employed as an extra member of the team, to share the daily team responsibilities to ensure that all children can access and participate in all aspects of the program. This shared responsibility means that while the cost of an additional educator may be supported with Inclusion Development Funding (IDF) linked to a particular child or children with ongoing high support needs, their role is to work with all children in the care environment.

The additional educator is over and above licensed ratio. For example in a 3-5 room where the ratio is 2:20, with an additional educator it changes to 3:20, therefore ensuring the educator team can more appropriately meet the needs of all children including those with additional needs. The role of the additional educator will therefore, look very similar to that of other educators in your service. Inclusion Development Fund (IDF) funding in Centre Based Day Care (CBDC) services is generally best used during the busier times of the day, for example, between 10am to 3pm. Whilst services may choose to split the additional educator hours approved across the day, it is important to remember that the funding to support increased ratios within the care environment should be rostered at the times that have been identified as the most challenging periods of each day.

With an increased educator-to-child ratio, educators have an extra resource and can work together to implement the 'Strategies' and 'Actions' identified in their Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP). This will help educators to address the identified 'Barriers' to inclusion, embed inclusive practices and support the inclusion of all children.

What is important is that all educators support and remain with all children in the care environment, to ensure they can participate fully in all aspects of the day.

Sometimes a family expects the additional educator to only work with their child. What can I say?

Speak with families about expectations right from the beginning. Talk about the benefits of inclusion for all children, acknowledging that how you respond to individual children and families might look different, according to their specific needs and preferences. When services are applying for Inclusion Development Funding it is important to provide families of children with additional needs a copy of the Inclusion Development Fund Information for Families brochure which can be downloaded from <http://www.idfm.org.au/for-families>

Questions for reflection:

- How are all educators, including the additional educator, informed about the identified barriers, strategies and actions for implementation, as outlined in your service's Strategic Inclusion Plan (SIP)?
- What processes are in place for recording progress towards inclusion, key learning points and future directions?

Reference: Inclusion Development Fund Manager: [Role of the Additional Educator](#) & Australian Government DoE— [Inclusion support program](#)



Should educators wish to further explore how a shared care approach can be best facilitated within in the care environment they are currently working, please contact your Inclusion Professional.

Celebration of Practice—Lipscombe Early Years Education and Care

Two remarkable early learning spaces at Lipscombe Early Years Education and Care, Playhouse and Seagulls, stand as an inspiration of inclusive practices, the power of teamwork, and a strength in the understanding of the role of the additional educator. Each team's commitment to nurturing every child's unique ability while fostering an atmosphere of collaboration among educators, families, and professionals shines as an example of the effective use of the additional educator funding.



At Playhouse, inclusive practices are not just a goal but an innate part of their ethos. The foundation of their success lies in a robust team approach that underpins every aspect of their operation. With favourable educator-to-child ratios, Playhouse ensures that each child receives the individual attention they deserve.

One of Playhouse's outstanding features is their daily dialogues among educators about, a shining star among the children. These conversations serve to share not only [child's] progress but also their evolving needs. A genuine sense of camaraderie permeates the team as they collectively celebrate [child's] achievements. Through coordinated efforts and open lines of communication involving educators, allied health professionals, and [child's] family, Playhouse can prioritise and tailor strategies to [child's] needs.

Team planning sessions at Playhouse are not just meetings; they are incubators of innovation. By convening educators and pooling their diverse perspectives, fresh ideas and insights emerge, enriching the learning experiences for all children. This shared planning approach ensures that goals and strategies are transparent and easily understood by every member of the team.

Flexibility is a cornerstone at Playhouse, driven by a simple yet profound principle: every moment is a teachable moment. By avoiding rigid schedules in favour of adapting strategies to [child's] real-time needs, they create an environment where learning is personalised and meaningful. Working this way means that other children see [child] included in the day in the same way as they are and they come to understand similarities and difference from an early age. There is no sense of fair or unfair as things are consistently approached. For example, [child] sometimes wanders with his food where others are asked to sit at the table.

Whether it's seizing an opportune moment at the end of the day or capitalizing on a post-nap awakening, educators work in harmony to nurture [child's] growth through implementation of the current goals and strategies. It is easy to identify time that best works for [child] to implement current strategies and build on what has been last tried. [child] is with us every day, so this approach allows us to be flexible. It doesn't matter which educator is present because the whole team works collectively and [child's] experiences do not revolve around the additional educator 'as per the roster' or because the 'additional person' arrives at 10am.

Importantly, Playhouse is a place where [child's] inclusion seamlessly intertwines with the experiences of their peers. This approach fosters understanding and acceptance among all children, demonstrating that differences are celebrated rather than excluded.

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Celebration of Practice—Lipscombe Early Years Education and Care

At Seagulls, another example of the spirit of teamwork and adaptability central to their success, is a core team of educators who have formed a close bond with [child], a testament to the centre's inclusive philosophy.

The regular staffing at Seagulls ensures continuity and understanding of [child's] needs, setting the stage for any team member to serve as the 'additional educator.' Even casual educators, familiar with [child's] journey from previous age groups, seamlessly blend into the team. This approach eliminates distinctions between regular and supplementary educators, emphasising collective responsibility for every child's development.

In the realm of scheduling, Seagulls thrives on inclusivity. There are no labels of 'additional educator'; instead, every team member receives shared hours for the room, creating an atmosphere of shared purpose. The focus is on achieving the best outcomes for all children, regardless of whether an 'additional' educator is needed.

Seagulls' educators acknowledge that some days present challenges, and an 'additional' educator might not be a solution. The priority remains on safety and cooperation, with all available resources leveraged to create a supportive environment for learning.

Communication is at the centre of Seagulls' success. The team collaborates to ensure strategies are consistently shared, ensuring that everyone is well-informed about children's evolving needs. Family involvement is cherished, as shared goals and a deep understanding of [child's] are nurtured through open channels of communication.

Beyond their immediate team, Seagulls taps into the knowledge of [child's] previous educators. This wealth of insights enriches their practices, reinforcing their commitment to continuous improvement.

In conclusion, Playhouse and Seagulls stand as models of inclusive practices and teamwork in early childhood education. Their approaches, embedded in collaboration, flexible strategies, and open communication, demonstrate that every child's potential can flourish when nurtured in an environment of acceptance and cooperation. These centres have underpinned the concept of the additional educator not being solely responsible for the one-to-one care of a child with additional support needs, but rather, an opportunity for a team to grow in authentically understanding how to create a supportive, nurturing, inclusive environment.



What is an inclusive environment?

Our role as educators is to recognise that all children have the right to engage within a learning environment that encourages them to be as involved and independent as possible, maximises their learning opportunities, builds their self confidence and supports their agency no matter what their abilities are. According to the Early Years Learning Framework 'Welcoming, safe and inclusive indoor and outdoor learning environments reflect, respect, affirm the identities, and enrich the lives of children and families.' (EYLF, 2022, pg . 23)

Educators who are committed to equity recognise that all children have the right to participate in inclusive early childhood settings, regardless of their circumstances, strengths, gender, capabilities or diverse ways of doing and being. They create inclusive learning environments and adopt flexible and informed practices, including making reasonable adjustments to optimise access, participation and engagement in learning. This supports wellbeing and positive outcomes for children in all their diversities.

To support all children's inclusion, educators recognise and respond to barriers that some children face. Such barriers can be related to disability, family diversity, cultural and linguistic diversity, neurodiversity, and children and families living through trauma and adversity.

Educators view all children as competent and capable



and hold high expectations for their learning. They strive to provide all children with equitable and participatory environments and experiences to promote their learning, development and wellbeing. In doing this, educators recognise that equitable

means fair, not equal or the same, and some children may need greater access to resources and support to participate in early childhood settings than others.

What are some characteristics of an inclusive learning environment?

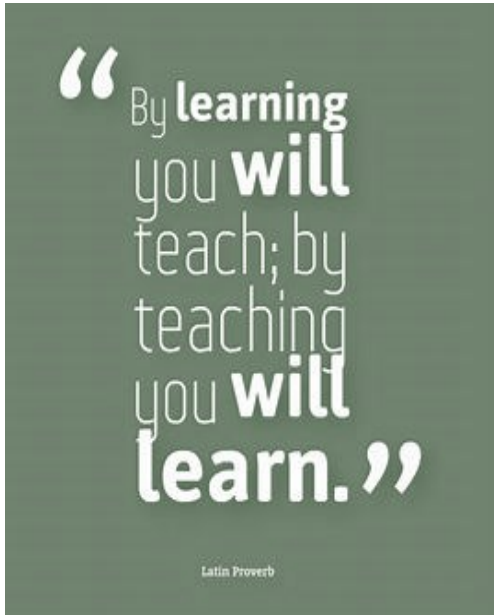
- Provide individual as well as group spaces that respond to children's interests and capabilities.
- Children and families are invited to contribute their ideas, interests and questions.
- Natural outdoor play spaces invite open-ended play and interactions, physically active play and games, spontaneity, risk-taking, exploration, discovery and connection.
- Open ended resources made from a variety of materials are available for all children to use.
- Adaptions are made to the environment to encourage all children to participate within the daily program, be successful in their learning and develop positive feelings of self-worth.
- Allowing time and a range of opportunities for individual and shared experiences.
- Provide flexibility in choice and routines.

Why are inclusive environments important?

- Teaches all of the children vital social skills such as patience, empathy and respect.
- Allows all children to feel valued and feel a sense of belonging within the environment.
- Increases the children's acceptance of diversity and awareness of individuality.
- Supports all children to reach their full potential and developmental needs.
- All children engage in meaningful learning experiences that allow them to achieve.
- Provides a strength based approach that fosters the children's self-esteem and confidence.
- Supports all children to become independent decisionmakers and express their needs.
- Builds educator knowledge, capacity and skills to respectfully include all children including children with additional needs within all aspects of the daily program.

Reference: [Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia V2.0, 2022](#)

Upcoming Community Professional Learning Opportunities



NEWS FROM SASS and for further information on all sessions – [PAST Program Training | Sexual Assault Support Service \(sass.org.au\)](#)

We've opened our next round of training as part of our PAST program (Prevention, Assessment, Support and Treatment of harmful sexual behaviours), funded by the Department of Communities Tasmania.

** Please note that completion of the Introductory Keeping Kids Safe session OR the Supporting Sexual Safety in the Disability Sector session are a pre-requisite for attending an Advanced Keeping Kids Safe session.

Glenorchy

14th September 2023 – 9:30am – 4:00pm - Introductory Keeping Kids Safe – <https://www.trybooking.com/CJMOT>

Campbell Town

28th September 2023 – 9:30am – 4:00pm – Supporting Sexual Safety in the Disability Sector - <https://www.trybooking.com/CJMPD>

St Helens

11th October 2023 – 9:30am – 4:00pm - Introductory Keeping Kids Safe - <https://www.trybooking.com/CJMPI>

12th October 2023 - 9:30am – 4:00pm - Advanced Keeping Kids Safe – <https://www.trybooking.com/CJMPIJ>

Huonville

24th October 2023 – 9:30am – 4:00pm - Supporting Sexual Safety in the Disability Sector – <https://www.trybooking.com/CJMPT>

Kingston

9th November 2023 – 10:30am – 2:30pm – HSB: An Overview for Educators – <https://www.trybooking.com/CJMVR>

Devonport/Burnie

22nd November 2023 – 9:30am – 4:00pm - Introductory Keeping Kids Safe - <https://www.trybooking.com/CJMVX>

23rd November 2023 - 9:30am – 4:00pm - Advanced Keeping Kids Safe – <https://www.trybooking.com/CJMVY>

Hobart

29th November 2023 – 9:30am - 4:00pm – Introductory Keeping Kids Safe – <https://www.trybooking.com/CJMWE>

30th November 2023 – 9:30am – 4:00pm - Advanced Keeping Kids Safe – <https://www.trybooking.com/CJMWG>



INCLUSION AGENCY TASMANIA

Please note Lady Gowrie Tasmania Inclusion Agency has offices in all three regions of the state, however, as Inclusion Professionals work predominately in early childhood and education and care services across the state, please direct any enquiries to Head Office where we can ensure a timely reply to your enquiry.

Monday to Friday 8:00am – 6:00pm (Head Office)
Operating 51 weeks of the year
After hours by arrangement

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