
Early Autism Supports Guide 2026

Overview

Our Early Autism Supports are grounded in optimising learning opportunities in children's everyday routines within early education classrooms; for example, indoor and outdoor play, cooperative and independent experiences, sensory exploration, mealtimes, toileting, and dressing routines. The service is provided by a Key Worker (with an education or Allied Health qualification) who connects the child, their family, the early education team, and any other service providers to embed learning supports within the child's everyday settings, routines, and interactions.

Our teaching strategies strive to be neurodiversity-affirming and build on a child's strengths, preferences and interests. Our work combines a developmental approach (with an emphasis on child motivation, choice, autonomy, and preferences) with behavioural 'science of learning' practices (such as prioritising fading supports for optimal independence and emphasis on data collection to closely monitor and support each child's progress). The La Trobe University Community Children's Centre team strives to meet early childhood and developmental support best-practice guidelines in innovative and practical ways that empower children, families, and early education teams.

Children's learning goals consider their NDIS plan goals, and their family and early education team's identified priorities for current and next learning settings. This generally includes using and understanding communication with others, co-regulating, identifying and meeting physical and emotional needs, and exploring play styles. Goal focus areas build sequentially as listed below.

1. Initial focus on ensuring child's health, safety and well-being needs,
2. Participating in classroom routines with minimal support,
3. Learning new skills within these routines.

Eligibility

To receive our supports children do not need a formal diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Our team will assess each child's skills and presentation of needs and supports accessed to confirm their eligibility (i.e., that the child shows indicators of an Autistic learning profile and would benefit from our services). Families are encouraged to share prior assessments or other service provider reports as part of the enrolment process.

Setting Options

Early Autism Supports can be provided in early education classrooms:

- At La Trobe University Community Children's Centre (LTUCCC), Bundoora
- At early education services (childcare/kinder) in the local community (within 30 mins of LTUCCC)

How Will My Child's Supports Start?

As part of the enrolment process.

- We will meet with your family in-person or virtually via telehealth to collect information about your family's previous and current support services, priority goals, and helpful strategies to support your child's learning, and the everyday setting/s you are seeking additional support within
- (*if receiving services at community early education service*) Our team member will connect with your child's early education service and complete a classroom-based assessment, in partnership with your child and their early education team
- (*if joining La Trobe University Community Children's Centre*) Your family and child meet your child's new education team at scheduled orientation visit/s (30-45 mins) prior to commencing their childcare enrolment

Developing Your Child's Program

The focus of the assessment process is to identify ways to best support each child's learning and your family's input is a critical ingredient. Your Key Worker will meet with your family and child's early education team to assess your child's skills in their everyday settings twice per year (approximately every 5 months)

This process includes:

- Reflecting on your child's learning progress and planning sustainable ongoing strategies to support their participation and learning. Exploring new learning goals that build on the skill growth of your child.
- Adjusting our supports to meet your child's individual support needs based on their wider team, including;
 - The focus and types of Key Worker support
 - Considering specialist Allied Health or coaching referrals for assessment and support
 - Increasing/decreasing the number and range of goals to suit the next teaching period's hours and type/s of supports
 - Increasing/decreasing the number of support hours and type of staff member provided to meet the child's current needs

Monitoring Your Child's Progress in the Program

A child's progress is monitored in several ways to support continued progress.

- *Daily*; Therapy Assistants take data on children's goals at regular intervals on our secure ASD Capture App during the session.
- *Weekly*; Key Worker provides clinical feedback to the family via email. E.g., focus of sessions, significant learning
- *Fortnightly*; the child's Key Worker will review the data to monitor child's progress for each goal/step, and either move the goal to the next step or adapt the current teaching step to support learning i.e., develop individualised strategies to support their learning and participation.
- *Quarterly*; the child's Key Worker will offer an update either via email or meeting in-person/via telehealth to share learning goals updates and helpful information on topics of relevance (e.g. toilet skills training, preparing for transition).
- *Twice Yearly*; New goals are developed for each child in partnership with their family, Key Worker team, education team, and as applicable, community service providers or second early education service.

Transdisciplinary Team

Lead Practitioner – Key Workers are experienced clinicians (qualified speech pathologists, psychologists or Bachelor/Diploma-qualified educators). Each family has a Key Worker who is their main contact regarding their child's supports. The Key Worker collaborates with families to co-develops goals and monitors the child's learning progress, shares information and strategies amongst the team, and coordinates referrals to specialist supports team as required. They also provide individualised coaching support to the child's education team and Therapy Assistants to ensure each child's goals are being delivered to a high standard and with optimal supports and resources.

Therapy Assistants facilitate supported learning opportunities, as part of individual Therapy Assistant sessions. They are early childhood educators, or university students completing teaching, psychology, speech pathology or occupational therapy degrees. They receive early autism support training and ongoing supervision to create and facilitate learning opportunities for the child to practice the goals with their peers and early childhood educators. While Therapy Assistants are focused on teaching the individual child's goals, they teach as part of the early childhood education group setting, promoting group participation and interaction with peers and fostering their relationship with their education team.

Specialist staff provide support through consultations and direct input with the child, their family and early education team as required. The team includes qualified speech pathology, psychology, and parent coaches. Referral for individualised support is made via the child's Key Worker with family's consent as additional fees apply (see Appendix 1 for details).

Please contact us for more information:

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Available Support Options

Fees are payable using your child's NDIS Plan and/or direct payment by child's family. La Trobe University is a Registered NDIS Service Provider Intervention fees are charged according to the current NDIS Price Guide, against line items for Capacity Building – Improved Daily Living;

- Early Childhood Supports – Early Childhood Professional and Psychologist (15_005_0118_1_3)
- Early Childhood Supports – Therapy Assistant - Level 2 (15_008_0118_1_3)

As per NDIS Code of Provider Conduct Section 4 – Act with Integrity, Honesty and Transparency, Item 55 states that “NDIS providers have a responsibility to only recommend and provide supports and services that are appropriate to the needs of the participant”. The Step Up and Step-Down approaches support this requirement, and supporting families to select a support service choice that matches their child’s current NDIS plan budget and plan reassessment date prioritising continuity of service access over intensity.

Option 1 – Weekly Lead Practitioner Support	Price per hour (\$) *	Hours
<p>These supports are provided on a weekly basis and are a clinical requirement of enrolment; however, hours are approximate only and subject to change depending on clinical needs of the participant</p>		
<p>Monitoring Support Needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead Practitioner works directly with the child and education team in the child's room. Meetings (Key Worker meetings with family, education team, other care team providers, etc). 	<p>\$193.99 per hour And/or \$86.79 per hour</p>	<p>1 hour a week (average)</p>
<p><i>Travel to Community Early Education Setting – up to 30 minutes travel between work sites, split between participants</i></p>	<p>\$193.99 per hour And/or \$86.79 per hour</p>	<p>1 hour a week (average)</p>

Option 2 – Weekly Lead Practitioner Therapy	Price per hour (\$) *	Hours
These supports are provided on a weekly basis and are a clinical requirement of enrolment; however, hours are approximate only and subject to change depending on clinical needs of the participant		
Monitoring Support Needs:	\$193.99 per hour	1 hour a week (average)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key Worker works directly with the child and education team in the child's room. Meetings (Key Worker meetings with family, education team, other care team providers, etc). 	And/or	
	\$86.79 per hour	
Teaching Goals:	\$193.99 per hour	1 hour a week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key Worker delivers supports to individual child with their peers and education team in daily routines, transitions & play. 	And/or	
	\$86.79 per hour	
Community Early Education Setting – up to 30 minutes travel between work sites, split between participants	\$97.00 per hour	1 hour a week (average)
	And/or	
	\$43.40 per hour	
Assessment: - twice per year (20-24 weeks)	\$193.99	approx. 5 hours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key worker completes assessment in naturalistic setting, including family and education team input. Develop and write goals for service provision. 	And/or	
	\$86.79 per hour	

Option 3 – Weekly Therapy Assistant <small>These supports are provided on a weekly basis and are a clinical requirement of enrolment; however, hours are approximate only and subject to change depending on clinical needs of the participant</small>	Price per hour (\$) *	Hours
Monitoring Support Needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key Worker works directly with the child and education team in the child's room. Meetings (Key Worker meetings with family, education team, other care team providers, etc). Supervising Therapist Assistant who is providing supports for child. 	\$193.99 per hour And/or \$86.79 per hour	1 hour a week (average)
<i>Community Early Education Setting – up to 30 minutes travel between work sites, split between participants</i>	\$97.00 per hour And/or \$43.40 per hour	1 hour a week (average)
(Flexible Support applicable to teaching goals service provision) Assessment - Twice per year (20-24 weeks) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key worker completes assessment in naturalistic setting, including family and education team input. Develop and write goals for service provision. 	\$193.99 And/or \$86.79 per hour	approx. 5 hours
Teaching Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Therapy Assistant delivers supports to child with their peers and education team in daily routines, transitions & play. 	\$86 per hour	3.5 hours (\$301) 5 hours (\$430)
<i>Community Early Education Setting – up to 15 minutes travel between work sites, split between participants</i>	\$43 per hour	3.5-hour shift = up to 15 mins travel \$10.75 5-hour shift = \$0

Flexible Supports <small>These are additional supports available to families and participants depending on the clinical needs of the participant</small>	Frequency	Price per hour (\$)
Specialist referrals and goals input as required and identified by family/Key Worker.	As required	\$193.99
Report Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key Worker and/or Allied Health reports, to support families i.e., with school transition etc. NDIA requested report; a report that is required at the commencement of a plan that outlines plan objectives and goals, or at plan review that measures functional outcomes against the originally stipulated goals, or that makes recommendations for ongoing needs (informal, community, mainstream or funded supports). 	As required	Per hourly rate of relevant staff member (See above)

Our Centre is committed to child and family health, safety, and wellbeing.

Our service is mandated by law to report all serious incidents and concerns for child/family safety to the appropriate regulatory bodies, for example Child Protection Services, the Department of Education and Training and NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.

If you have any questions about this, please do not hesitate to ask.

APPENDIX 1: Specialist Referral Topics

Speech Pathology:

- Augmentative and Alternative Communication assessment, selecting trial systems (e.g., visual support, key word sign), coaching support to tailor system to child and family's needs, supporting with NDIS Assistive Technology funding application.
- Pragmatic language speech assessment and report (e.g. inform child's goals, support with Department of Education and Training Disability Inclusion funding).
- Feeding issues assessment and strategies plan (collaboration option with Occupational Therapist)

Psychology:

- Positive behaviour support plan and coaching for staff and family for mild behaviours of concern (incl. functional behaviour assessment) (collaboration option with Speech Pathologist/Occupational Therapist).
- Complex emotional co-regulation needs (collaboration option with Occupational Therapist).

Parent Coaching:

- Support for family to generalize key learning into home environment, including communication devices/strategies, support with meals, morning/evening routines, and so on.
- Support for family to embed engagement and teaching strategies with their child, in their home's daily routines.