Early Childhood Intervention
Best Practice

What is Early Childhood Intervention (ECI)?
ECI is the process of providing specialised support and services for infants and young children who have developmental delays or disabilities, their families and communities, in order to promote development, well-being and community participation.

Why is ECI important?
Early childhood is a time of remarkable brain development. Learning and development is most rapid during the early childhood years. These years lay the foundation for subsequent learning. Quality early education enhances children’s developmental, social and educational gains.

Starting Early
The earlier intervention begins, the greater the benefits for the child and the family.
Early childhood intervention services work alongside families to:
- build on family strengths and develop new skills
- focus on the family's priorities and circumstances
- build on family knowledge in supporting and nurturing their child
- optimise their child's development and ability to participate in family and community life
- develop family resilience and well-being.

What is best practice?
Current research in early childhood intervention indicates that best practice centres on a family centred and inclusive approach which includes transdisciplinary teamwork involving a key worker.

Family centred practice means working in partnerships with families to address the issues of most concern to them.

An inclusive approach means providing children with the opportunities to participate meaningfully in all everyday environments (including home, Early Childhood Education, school and community settings) with the supports they need to do so. In this approach the focus is on the child within the environments in which they spend their time.

Transdisciplinary teamwork involves a team of professionals working together to deliver a tailored early intervention service to children and their families. Families are valued members of the team. Services delivered include early education, therapy, counselling and family support. One professional is chosen as the main point of contact for families and is known as a Key Worker. The Key Worker helps coordinate the delivery of services and manages the links between members of the transdisciplinary team and is the main service provider for the child and family.

What does Best Practice look like in BEI?
A key feature of Ballina Early Intervention (BEI) practice is a family centred approach which acknowledges and builds on existing family strengths and resources to address issues that are of most concern and a priority for each family. This is achieved through providing a range of different and flexible services for families to choose. Families are involved in decision making about types of services and resources provided, goals and strategies to support their child and family (Individual Family Service Plan and Individualised Education Plan). BEI implements practices which build the capacity of families to help
their child to develop the skills to participate in everyday routines and environments. Practices include family support sessions at BEI, workshops and training, referral and information, and social events for all family members including siblings. Families can also become a member of the organisation's Management Committee.

Within the services of Ballina Early Intervention, you and your child will be allocated a **Key Worker**. Your Key Worker:

- Helps you decide on the goals for your child in your Individual Family Service Plan and Individualised Education Plan
- Shares information with other professionals who work with your child such as therapists, paediatricians and family support agencies
- Develops strategies to support your child’s development and learning and implements these during centre based groups (if your child attends a group) or within an inclusive early childhood setting
- Provides support to early childhood educators within your child’s Early Childhood Education and Care setting
- Liaises with teachers and supports your child’s transition to school
- Gives advice which allows you to coordinate services and access other agencies and funding
- Offers you a flexible and responsive service that varies over time to meet the changing needs of your child and family
- Works closely with you, your child and any other significant people in your child’s life eg. Grandparents

BEI supports the position that children with developmental disabilities and additional needs share with all children the right to be valued as individuals and as contributing members of families, communities and society. This is achieved by supporting families to access **inclusive services** and implementing recommendations from the IFSP/IEP into

- Your family’s existing daily routine
- Your home environment
- Other places of significance such as an early childhood setting or school
- Your community eg the local shopping centre or playground.