Ballina Early Intervention (BEI) is a community based organisation that provides a service for children from birth to school entry age who have or are at risk of developing a condition or other additional need that might impact on their development and learning.

BEI is a service of Rainbow Children’s Centre Inc. which is a community managed body. The Committee of parents is responsible for the management of this service.

We are funded by Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) and the NSW Department of Education and Community Services (DECS) as well as other specific purpose grants.

It is the Mission of Ballina Early Intervention to:

• Provide an educational service to maximise the development and learning of each child;

• Support and empower families in accessing appropriate support and specialist services;

• Provide family friendly experiences and opportunities to support the child’s everyday learning environments; and

• Strengthen the capacity of other early childhood services in Ballina Shire to meet the needs of children through inclusive programs.

Who can use the services of BEI?
The service is for children aged birth to school age entry (and support for the transition to school for 5-8 year olds who have been enrolled at BEI) who have an additional need, disability or delays in their development in two or more areas or a specific diagnosis strongly associated with global delays, and who live in Ballina Shire and some surrounding areas.

Areas of concern could be related to:

• communication skills (including receptive and expressive language)
• motor skills (ie, fine and gross motor)
• sensory perception (ie, vision and hearing)
• cognitive skills – learning and understanding
• social skills (including behaviour and play)
• specific diagnoses such as Autistic Spectrum Disorder or Down Syndrome
How do I seek assistance?

Children may be referred as a result of parents/carers own concerns or at the suggestion of the GP, Paediatrician, early childhood centre staff or other professionals. Families may contact BEI to discuss their concerns about their child. Support and advice will be offered regarding the next step for families, which may be referral for further assessment, referral to a more appropriate service and an appointment with BEI staff may be organised.

What will happen after my child is enrolled at BEI?

Service Users have a choice of service delivery options. On enrolment these options are outlined and possible service delivery discussed. Options are sometimes limited by funding and staffing constraints. The services available include:

1. A Family Service Facilitator/Key Worker will be appointed to liaise between your family and the range of services available to assist you within this region.
2. Your child will be assessed and an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) will be developed, and the plan will include an individual education program (IEP) for your child.
3. The IFSP and IEP will be developed using a family focused approach where your input and wishes will direct what services we provide for your child.
4. Goals will be developed as part of these plans. Meeting these goals may involve your family in:
   a. Small group sessions at BEI
   b. MyTime Play sessions
   c. Home visits by early childhood intervention teachers to assist you and your child as appropriate
   d. Visits by our Early Intervention teachers to your child’s early childhood setting
   e. Educational or behavioural assessments by our specialist early intervention teachers
   f. Referral to other agencies for specialist services and assessments eg Occupational Therapy, Speech Pathology, Psychologist etc
   g. Resource development such as social stories and visual resources for families/Early Childhood Settings
   h. Assistance to access grants and other support programs for your child and your family
   i. Family support meetings, social functions and information workshops or
   j. Other strategies as discussed with each individual family.

Inclusion

Inclusion refers to the active participation and meaningful involvement of children with disabilities and additional needs in the same early childhood programs and community settings as other typically developing children. Current research indicates that the most effective form of early childhood intervention is to support children in the environments in which they spend most of their time, that is, in the home and mainstream early childhood services.

Educational Groups at BEI

Some children have specific goals that can be worked on in small group educational sessions with our staff, using our resources and equipment. The group leader is a specialist early intervention teacher who will ensure an appropriate educational program is provided for your child. Most sessions are for 1-2 hours. Parents/carers need to attend these sessions at BEI with their child. A goal of these sessions is to show you strategies that you can implement at home with your child in your daily routines. Research proves that practice at home in regular daily experiences is most effective in development and learning for children. Parents/carers also have the opportunity to spend time talking with the other parents/carers in the group. Guest speakers are often organised and information is shared relevant to the interests of the group. It is important that children and
family attend regularly to gain the utmost benefit of the sessions. Staff will contact families about the groups running for the year.

Planning to support your child
Our staff meet with individual families and other professionals regularly to discuss each child’s goals and family priorities. It is the choice of each family as to who attends, but it is recommended that teachers, therapists and other support people contribute. By communicating, everyone becomes aware of the service the child is receiving and service providers can thus assist the family to establish goals which meet the needs and strengths of the child across all settings. Notes are taken in the meeting and recorded in an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP). The goals to focus on for your child, becomes your child’s Individual Education Plan (IEP). A copy of this is given to the family, early childhood setting, therapist or any other relevant person so that we are all working towards the same goals.

Early Intervention Teacher visits to your child’s early childhood setting
We can support the staff at your child’s early childhood setting with ideas, strategies, programs and resources. We arrange these visits in consultation with you and the child’s setting. We endeavour to give feedback after each visit through the Early Childhood Service Support Plan. As your child usually spends more time in an early childhood setting than at BEI, we see this support in an inclusive setting as vital to your child’s development and learning. For children making the transition to school, this support is provided to the classroom setting.

Therapy
We do not employ therapists permanently at BEI. All children enrolled in BEI can receive therapy through Community Health, ADHC, The Cerebral Palsy Alliance or privately. However we do employ therapists on a contract basis to work with some of the groups and provide extra support and advice to the teachers and families and liaise with any therapists working with your child.

In addition to this, families may be able to access therapy sessions subsidised by Medicare through the Enhanced Primary Care initiative. Parents should take their child to their GP for an assessment. BEI will give you a referral letter to your GP. You should ask your GP to prepare a management plan, which is a comprehensive plan for the management of your child’s needs. The GP will need to agree that your child’s plan should include therapy services. Most children who are enrolled at BEI should be eligible for an Enhanced Primary Care Plan for therapy. Medicare will subsidise a number of therapy sessions (psychology, speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and other services) per calendar year. If your child is eligible, Medicare will provide a rebate for the cost of the therapy sessions. Generally, the rebate does not cover the full cost of therapy sessions and you will be required to pay the gap.

Special programs
From time to time, BEI receives special funding for projects. These have included Northcott Technology Project (2011) which supported children within BEI with learning to use technology for communication and provided training for BEI staff. The Playing & Learning to Socialise Program (PALS) has been implemented in early childhood settings by BEI staff based on additional funding.

Home visits
Some families benefit from Early Intervention teachers visiting their homes to help set up strategies in children’s everyday environments. Staff at BEI will endeavour to work with families in gaining an understanding of their family context whether home visits are possible or not.
Ballina MyTime meets each week at BEI. This day is different each year to allow opportunities for all families to access this group. MyTime groups support families of young children with an additional need or chronic medical condition. Parents, grandparents and carers can meet at a MyTime group to socialise and share ideas, as well as clarify information relevant to their needs and interests. The aim of the group is to assist families to understand and share the rewards and intensity of the caring role. The facilitator is an Early Childhood Intervention teacher who introduces topics for discussion and at times may organise a guest speaker to address a various range of topics.

At the Cabbage Tree Island MyTime weekly get together there are child care support workers from Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Bundjalung backgrounds to interact with the children in a range of experiences over the session.

MyTime is a national initiative funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services through Tresillian Family Care Centres throughout Australia.

Resources and equipment Library
Some of our resources, equipment, books and DVDs are available for loan. Ask a staff member if you would like to borrow these items. It is important that these resources are returned as required so that other families may also enjoy access to them. These resources are also loaned to early childhood settings to support your child’s learning.

Workshops and Training Opportunities
Throughout the year, Ballina Early Intervention will run workshops for families as well as children’s services staff and professionals. These are focused on assisting families/professionals in developing their understanding or skills in interacting with and supporting children with additional needs. Past workshops have focused on areas such as guiding children’s behaviour, the Circle of Security and children’s learning. There will also be workshops and training focusing on specific delays or disabilities and behaviors as relevant.

Fees
Parents are required to pay a yearly fee of $120 or $30 per term. Invoices will be sent to families in the first term and you will have the choice to pay the yearly or term fee. You will receive further invoices at the beginning of term if the yearly fee is not paid up front.

Ballina Early Intervention is only partially government funded by the Department of Education and Communities and Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC). A requirement of this government funding is that parents pay a fee for services however minimal. These fees cover only a fraction of the costs of operating the service and are usually put towards purchasing resources. The Management Committee has agreed that fundraising requires too much work by staff and families who have many other pressing commitments.

Invoices can be paid by
- Electronic Funds Transfer or Direct Deposit
- by EFTPOS, Cheque or Money Order at the Rainbow Children’s centre office (next door to BEI)
- a cash payment can be arranged with BEI staff (Rainbow does not accept cash)

If you have any difficulties in paying fees, please contact Gill Hunter (Administrator) or Sue Farmer (Coordinator).
Social Occasions
We endeavour to organise social functions during the year. For example:

🌟 Family Days eg: Macadamia Castle Excursion
🌟 Pampering Day during Carer’s week in October – Parents are treated to a morning tea or lunch and pampering.

Teamwork and liaison with other people who work with your child
We liaise and meet regularly with the various people you have indicated as also working with your child. These may include Staff of Ballina Community Health, Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC), local Paediatricians, and early childhood setting staff.

ADDITIONAL FAMILY FUNDING OPTIONS

• Helping Children with Autism
  Children who have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder are entitled to the ‘Helping Children with Autism’ (HCWA) funding of $12,000 over a 2 year period from the Federal Government.
  If you are eligible your Pediatrician will give you the relevant referral documentation to enable you to access these funds.

• Better Start - for children with a disability
  This funding provides improved access to Early Intervention Services. Eligible children will be able to access up to $12,000 in early intervention funding. Children are eligible if diagnosed with Angelman Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, CHARGE syndrome, Cornelia de Lange syndrome, Cri du Chat syndrome, Down syndrome - including those with mosaic, Down Syndrome, Fragile X Syndrome, Fragile X syndrome with full mutation – includes mosaicism, Kabuki syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, Rett’s disorder, Smith-Magenis syndrome, Williams syndrome, hearing impairment or vision impairment, Microcephaly. Contact the Local Carers Association on 1800 242 636 or at www.betterstart.net.au

BEI staff are happy to assist you in accessing more information in regard to these entitlements. Families should speak with the Autism Advisor Program 1300 978 611 or email autismadvisor@autismspectrum.org.au for assistance in this regard.

Hours of Operation
The BEI service is open between 8.30 am and 4.30 pm during school term times i.e. we close for school holidays.

All BEI staff work part time and spend a lot of time out of the office visiting children, families, and other children’s services. For this reason, we cannot always be in the office to answer your calls. However, please leave a message on our answering machine, and we will call you back when we are next in the office.

Please remember that you are welcome to contact our staff to discuss your child’s successes and needs or make appointments with staff. You don’t have to wait for us to contact you.
BALLINA EARLY INTERVENTION STAFF

Coordinator/Early Intervention teacher (part time) - Sue Farmer

Early Intervention Teacher (part-time) – Elaina Creighton

Early Intervention Teacher (part-time) - Carole Piper

MyTime Coordinator (part time) - Sharee Bloomfield

Administration (part-time) – Gill Hunter

Early Intervention Support Worker (part-time) - Simone Bennett

Early Intervention Support Worker (part time) - Megan Ferguson

Director Rainbow Children’s Centre – Leo Prendergast

Consultant Therapists for 2014-
  Caroline Jordan-Occupational Therapist
  Suzy Oram-Speech Pathologist

Phone: 6686 6889    Fax: 6686 6267

Email: bei@rainbowchildrenscentre.com.au

Location: 4 John Sharpe Street,
EAST BALLINA  NSW  2478
(Adjacent to the Rainbow Children’s Centre)