Ballina Early Intervention held a very successful workshop day with presenters that showcased the evidence based practice and values that support young children with developmental disabilities and additional needs, and their families, within inclusive, natural learning environments such as home, early childhood settings and the community.

Eighty participants from early childhood education settings and professionals working with families with children with additional needs took part in the day at Lennox Head Community Centre on the 4th May. Participants had an opportunity to choose from a variety of workshops throughout the day which included:

- Does this Child Need Help? "Raising Concerns with Families" - Sharee Bloomfield BEI
- Transgenerational Trauma - Mel Brown Spirit Dreaming
- Supporting Children with ASD in inclusive environments - Corinne Cribb ASPECT
- Cultural Competency: Destination or Discovery - Sue Farmer BEI
- Developmental Delay - How do I know when a child needs support and how do I help them? – Dr Jen Piercy
- Focus on early childhood inclusion—strengthening inclusive practice - Sharon Gay Early Childhood Intervention Association
- The Power Struggle—Building respectful relationships and encouraging positive behaviours - Lynette Funnell Early Childhood Educator
- Transition to School: Getting Ready Together- Carole Piper BEI & Sharon Gay ECIA

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Participating & Belonging: Journeys of Inclusion (cont)

The day also provided an opportunity for various local service providers to showcase what services and supports they offer for families and children's services staff who may not be aware of the types of services available to a family of a child with additional needs. This provided an opportunity for participants to network with other agencies and professionals. Various organisations promoting inclusive practices by providing information and display stalls on the day included Northcott, Richmond Tweed Inclusion Support Agency, ECIA, Far North Coast Early Childhood Intervention Centres, ASPECT, Family Day Care, Northern Rivers Social Development Council, Wesley Dalmar—out of home care, Foundations Care, Resources at Hand & Ballina Byron Family Centre.

General feedback from evaluations indicated that the majority of participants found the day very satisfying and worthwhile. They enjoyed the high quality of the presenters and information, gained worthwhile and relevant information which could be applied in their organisations, found the content to be practical and felt that all workshops were interactive and encouraged discussion.

Some specific comments included:

...the information on working with children with ASD was comprehensive and practical...

...the information could be shared with other staff at our service...

...it was good because strategies could be used with many children within a centre not just those with additional needs...

... the presentation style was very engaging and informative...

...I am now better able to identify developmental delays...

...the knowledge and experiences related to real situations...

...it made me rethink my understandings of school readiness and the Transition to school...

...it provided updated information on the transition process and the ways that early childhood intervention could support this process....

...the information will assist me in approaching and speaking with parents...

...it helped me gain an understanding of parenting styles, as well as providing tools about communicating with families....

...the workshop provided me with strategies for interacting with families from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds who may have experienced trauma...

...I would like to learn more on this topic and how society could help others deal with trauma and move on from these issues...

...I learnt about the great resources available...

This workshop day was partially funded by Early Childhood Intervention Coordination Project (ECICP) and with the support of the Richmond Tweed Inclusion Support Agency.
Inclusion Workshop Day
Lennox Community Centre

4th May, 2015
My Time—Ballina & Cabbage Tree Island

My Time with Sharee at Ballina has been quiet but still very enjoyable with a few families coming along and making social connections. There will be a change in focus for next term so get ready to do some music with Sharee and Simone!

MyTime at Cabbage Tree Island has continued to grow and a real highlight of this term has been the making of Kokadama plants with Kath from Rainbow. It has also been great to have a ‘Yarn Up’ circle link in with us focussing on women’s wellbeing.

Sharee has also been very busy with courses. Stepping Stones PPP (Positive Parenting Program) has hopefully given her extra skills to work with families on mild behaviour issues that they might be having at home.

MyTime Monday morning Music Group

When: Commencing on Monday 27th July, 2015
Time: 9.30 am – 11.00 am
Where: Ballina Early Intervention

This group will be run by Sharee and Simone and the focus will be on enjoying some simple musical experiences with your child/children. The group is open to any parent and any child – siblings are welcome and if you just want to come along on your own with no children to chat to other parents, you can. This will be a relaxed group time with the focus on music, play experiences and having a social time.

During the group, the first part of the session is for parents/carers and their children to participate in the musical experiences together. There will be a focus on looking at simple songs and finding musical opportunities throughout the day. Current research is supporting the importance of providing a music program for children as it promotes skill development across such a wide range of developmental areas. There will also be lots of time to participate in indoor activities as well as some outdoor time for the children, and a chance for a cuppa and chat for parents.

Limited spaces—contact BEI office by phone (6686 6889) or email (bei@rainbow.nsw.edu.au) to indicate your intention to attend.
Wednesday Transition to School Group

This term has been very busy with many new and exciting experiences. Carole and Elaina have introduced the PALS puppets to the Transition to School group with a weekly social skill being introduced, modelled and practiced. This has been a great opportunity to develop confidence in skills such as saying hello to people, taking turns and sharing toys. These skills are being encouraged and can be practiced in the home, community and early childhood education settings. Carole has worked on developing the children’s emotional awareness with a range of fun experiences around feelings including discussions, photos and drawings on feeling sad, happy, surprised, angry and others. Elaina has enjoyed implementing a range of experiences with different turn taking games, fine motor activities and developing positive relationships with peers. All children are now comfortable in our environment and working towards their individual goals as part of a group. Next term is our last term for this group. Carole and Elaina are looking forward to working in partnerships with families in supporting the children’s transitions to school and orientation days.

During the parent group with Sue there has been lots of lively discussion about the transition to school process where parents have raised concerns they may have for their children. It’s great to have families share their experiences and offer ideas and support to each other.

BEI staff met with representatives from local public schools in May to provide information about BEI children and discuss the relevant processes regarding enrolment.

BEI families will be treated to a Movie Morning at Ballina Cinemas prior to the end of term. We hope you all enjoy the day!
All parents need to advocate for their child from time to time. One of the values of family centred practice is that parents know their child best and want the best for their child. Once a child is diagnosed with a developmental disability or additional need, families enter a world full of professionals, services, application forms and jargon. When families receive a diagnosis for their child with additional needs or are concerned about their child’s development they often have to negotiate a maze and can be overwhelmed—knowing what services are available, what funding may be available and what they might access with respect to their child’s needs. Many families find it hard enough to cope with their initial emotions at discovering their child has an additional need let alone knowing what services are available to them and how to access these. Advocating for your child at this time can be a challenging and often difficult role.

Advocacy involves speaking out:

○ to get the best services, resources and information
○ to make sure children’s rights are protected
○ to make sure rules and regulations serve the best interests of children, and
○ to support and speak out for changes to systems to better support children.

Parents can speak out on behalf of their child, as well as on their own behalf. This can be very difficult as once parents have worked out what they want and need, they may experience knock backs, waiting lists, issues with people’s attitudes and insufficient resources. Families may offer views that are not already being considered on behalf of their child and may be concerned that they will be seen as “pushy”.

At times families may require support from others as they try to obtain what they believe their child or family needs. Support may come from other family members, friends and social/community groups, advocacy agencies or your Early Intervention Key Worker. A family’s Key Worker can play a role in providing support and in assisting parents to develop skills, knowledge and connections that can enhance their advocacy role into the future.

Some of the many ways parents advocate for their children are:

○ making phone calls
○ writing letters
○ following up on commitments
○ contacting someone in authority
○ educating professionals about their child’s strengths and needs
○ networking throughout their community to improve services
To build on your advocacy skills:

- set priorities and deal with the most important needs one at a time...make sure the person you are talking with is responsible for the current dilemma;
- find out who will be attending meetings regarding your child so you are prepared;
- link up with other parents in similar situations or parent groups;
- Practice! Ask people you trust to listen to your points of view and give you feedback;
- provide clear and relevant information about your child, as people may not be aware that your child has a particular need;
- listen and be respectful...believe that the people you are talking to want what is best (but perhaps different) for your child ;
- at the end of any meeting, try to summarise what has been said and agreed to. Review any action plan with everyone so everyone hears what you believe to be the decisions from the meeting;
- thank the people who have been helpful even if all they did was listen to your point of view, they may be more interested in helping you in the future.

**Supporting Families in their Advocacy Role**

Families vary in how much support they require in advocacy. Some may need support in communicating concerns to other professionals but are happy to take a lead role; others would prefer that their early intervention Key worker take a lead role and model strategies they may be able to use in future.

Your Key Worker can:

- help you identify and sort through the different systems and agencies which can support your family;
- help identify other sources of help and link your family with other parents, parent networks or support groups; and
- provide your family with the information that will help you make decisions.

Successful advocacy means that the family:

- can identify what they need and are informed about access and availability
- can communicate their child’s and family’s needs
- is confident to discuss concerns with service providers
- and their child’s best interests are being met.

**Parents & Childrens Voices**— BEI would love to hear from any parents willing to share their success stories about how they have advocated for their child, been supported in getting access to a service or have stood up for your child’s rights.

Local Advocacy agency—Ability Incorporated Advocacy Service—www.abilityincorporated.org.au
Their aim is to protect, promote and advance the rights of people with disability. This is a FREE and confidential service to consumers—Phone—02 6628 8188.

**Resources**: ecii (2012) The Key Worker: Resources for early childhood intervention professionals. Noah’s Ark, Malvern VIC.
Despite the rain and mud, BEI families and staff had a magical morning at White Horse Connections, Tevan run by Equine Educator, Kerry Johnston.

For many of the children it was the first time they had even been close to a horse or had the opportunity to stroke or sit on one. It was wonderful to see their faces light up when they were first in the moment of making the connection with Max and Handsome.

Any fears and apprehensions were soon overcome and children couldn't wait to get the helmet on and mount little Handsome and have a sit, trot and even a 'jump' over poles!

There were definitely some golden moments, a few happy tears, filled hearts and lots of photo opportunities!
Photos removed from this page for email version of Newsletter.
**Calendar Updates**

- Movie Outing—24th June—9.45am
- Term 2 finishes 26th June and Term 3 commences Monday 12th July.
- Strategies for Inclusion workshop series—30th June & 21st July, 2015—isf@bdcsa.org
- Key Word Sign Basic Workshop at Tweed—25th July—0414 424 123—$70
- Does this Child Need Help? - a one day workshop to be held in Term 3 for Early Childhood professionals—date to be advised.

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**Quote**

"The least movement is of importance to all .... The entire ocean is affected by a pebble."  
*Blaise Pascal*

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**Bowlarama**

**Saturday, 25th July, 2015**

This is a FREE event organised by the Lara Jean Association Inc

If BEI families would like to attend please let Gill (BEI admin) know by 15th July so she can order tickets for you.

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**Many thanks to the BEI families who have paid their term/annual fees.**