

We call our nationally consistent approach to working with children younger than 9 and their families the early childhood approach.

We developed our approach from evidence-based research with the help of leading experts in early childhood intervention.

We've explained the theory of [early childhood intervention](#) that we use in our approach. Our early childhood approach focusses on being both family centered, and strengths based.

We do this by acknowledging that as parents and carers you know your child best. We concentrate on understanding what your child can do.

We know the early childhood years are critical. They set foundations for how children learn and develop. We want to support you and your child early to improve their outcomes later in life.

To deliver our early childhood approach, we have partnered with organisations called early childhood partners.

They are well established in communities and have experience in working with families to connect with available support.

Learn more about [early childhood partners](#).

Who can access our early childhood approach?

If you have concerns about your child's development, or your child has a disability, you can contact an early childhood partner to access our early childhood approach.

Usually, you would've already discussed your concerns, or your child's disability, with your doctor, child health nurse, or other health professional.

Your child doesn't need a diagnosis from a medical professional to access support through our early childhood partners.

You will hear us use different terms including development concerns, developmental delay or disability.

When we talk about [developmental concerns](#) we mean there are delays in your child's development that don't fully meet our definition of developmental delay.

These delays may impact the everyday activities your child can do when compared with children of the same age. But it may be unclear if support is required from a team of professionals or for more than 12 months.

A child younger than 6 with developmental concerns can be supported by an [early childhood partner](#) with connection to early supports. They may also be supported by mainstream and community services. Learn more about [early connections](#).

When we talk about [developmental delay](#), we are talking about children younger than 6 who are likely to meet the NDIS [developmental delay criteria](#). This means they are considered to have a substantial reduction in

functional capacity.

This means the everyday activities the child does or can do is at a significantly lower competency level or is substantially different when compared with children of the same age.

The support needed for the child to do the activity would also be significantly greater compared to children the same age. If your child is younger than 6 with developmental delay, your early childhood partner may recommend you consider applying to the NDIS on your child's behalf.

If you decide to apply to the NDIS, your early childhood partner can support you to apply.

When we talk about a child with a disability we mean they have an impairment that's likely to be permanent. The impairment could be intellectual, cognitive, neurological, sensory or physical.

You can read more about the early intervention and disability requirements in the [Our Guideline - Applying to the NDIS](#).