Plan and implement inclusion of children with additional needs

**Learner guide**

Version 2

Training and Education Support  
Industry Skills Unit  
Meadowbank

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# Table of contents

## Introduction

1. General introduction ................................................................. 9
2. Using this learner guide ............................................................. 9
3. Prior knowledge and experience .............................................. 11
4. Unit of competency overview .................................................... 11
5. Assessment ................................................................................ 16

## Section 1: Identify children with additional needs

- Identify an additional need .......................................................... 19
- Negative labels .......................................................................... 26
- Putting people first ...................................................................... 27
- Implications of labelling a child ................................................... 31
- Why do children have additional needs? .................................... 32
- Language and communication difficulties .................................. 33
- Alternative methods of communication ....................................... 34
- Types of speech and language problems ..................................... 38
- Caregiving strategies for children with speech or language difficulties .... 39
- Children who have a difference in their cognitive development .......... 44
- Children with differences in their physical development ............... 48
- Children who have differences in their sensory ability ................ 52
- Children who have differences in their social and emotional development ..... 58
- Health needs .............................................................................. 63
- Children who have families with different circumstances and needs .... 66
- Observing the child ..................................................................... 68
- Summary ................................................................................... 81

## Section 2: Develop a plan for inclusion

- Sample ....................................................................................... 83
Element and performance criteria: ................................................................. 83

2. Develop a plan for inclusion ..................................................................... 83
Inclusion ........................................................................................................ 83

Develop an understanding of a child's interests, emerging skills and competencies and use the information to plan ................................................... 86

Benefits of inclusion .................................................................................... 90

Developing a plan for inclusion ................................................................... 96

Adapting the service to meet the child's needs ........................................... 114

Toys and equipment .................................................................................... 118

Specialist resources (human resources) ....................................................... 122

When a child’s needs cannot be met within the children's service ............ 124

Summary ...................................................................................................... 124

Section 3: Implement strategies to meet the child’s additional needs . 125

Support the child's entry in the service ....................................................... 125

Encourage others to adopt inclusive attitudes and practices ..................... 129

Provide support to others in order to implement strategies ......................... 131

Summary ...................................................................................................... 143

Section 4: Consult with others about ongoing issues that arise .............. 145

Summary ...................................................................................................... 155

Section 5: Monitor and review strategies .................................................... 157

Adapt to changes in the child’s participation .............................................. 160

Section 4 ...................................................................................................... 175

Appendix 1 .................................................................................................. 177

Appendix 2 .................................................................................................. 179

Appendix 3 .................................................................................................. 181

Reference list ................................................................................................ 183

Resource Evaluation Form ........................................................................... 189
What does the term ‘additional needs’ mean to you?

Activity 1.1

What does the term additional needs mean to you? Write some of your ideas based on your knowledge and learning so far.

Compare your answer with some other learners.

The National Quality Standard uses the term additional needs to define and categorise ‘children who require or will benefit from specific considerations or adaptations’ (ACECQA, 2011, p202) the examples they give include children who:

- are Aboriginals or Torres Strait Islanders
- are recent arrivals in Australia
- have a culturally and linguistically diverse background
- live in isolated geographic locations
- are experiencing difficult family circumstances or stress
• are at risk of abuse or neglect
• are experiencing language and communication difficulties
• have a diagnosed disability—physical, sensory, intellectual or autism spectrum disorder
• have a medical or health condition
• demonstrate challenging behaviours and behavioural or psychological disorders
• have developmental delays
• have learning difficulties
• are gifted or have special talents
• have other extra support needs.

The Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (Annual Report 2005) talk about additional needs as including:

• children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds
• children with diagnosed disabilities
• children undergoing continuing assessment for disability or developmental delay
• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children; and Australian South Sea Islander children.
• refugee children who have been subjected to torture and trauma.

In this unit, ‘additional needs’ will be used to refer to children’s needs based on:

• language and communication disorder
• physical disability
• sensory/perceptual impairment (hearing or vision)
• learning or cognitive disability
• health problems or disorder
• behavioural or psychological disorders
• giftedness.

As suggested by the other definitions offered above, in practice ‘additional needs’ is also used to refer to children who have needs arising from:

• particular family circumstances and needs
- risk of abuse
- recent arrival in Australia from a different culture
- cultural/language background differing from the culture/language of the centre
- cultural/religious practices

You should have studied these particular needs and circumstances in other units so we will not focus on them in detail in this unit.
Did your own definition of additional needs include a range of differences and types of need? Think back to the last group of children with whom you worked. How many of these children would be identified as having additional needs according to the definitions given above?

Taking a broad approach, a ‘child with additional needs’ could refer to any child who requires additional consideration, help, or input in order to develop to their full potential. The term encompasses a range of needs and is more positive than some of those used in the past.

Using a broad definition obviously means that many children are included.

**Activity 1.2**

Read through the following and list the additional needs of each child.

1. Gabe is two years old and is from a non-English-speaking background. Gabe and his family speak only Japanese at home. He attends your service four days per week. There is no-one in your service who speaks Japanese.

2. Noah is allergic to peanuts and has had an anaphylactic reaction while eating a muesli bar. Noah has an ‘EpiPen’ which he brings daily to your service.
Activity 1.2 (Continued)

3. Katie was diagnosed after birth with hydrocephalus. She has had a shunt inserted to drain the excess fluid from her brain. She attends your after-school care program five days a week. She is a very physically active girl.

4. Remonda, four years of age, has severe tooth decay. Her teeth are black and appear to be rotting. Remonda attends your long day care program one day a week. She constantly complains of a sore mouth.

5. Mohammed, five years of age, likes to play in the home corner alone. He pretends to cook hummus and tabouli. He likes to feed and care for the dolls.
Terms used to describe additional needs

It would be useful, at this point, to look at other terms that are often used to describe children with additional needs, so that you can understand what they mean and how to use them properly.

When referring specifically to people with a disability, the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2002) now uses a new classification system called The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF). It focuses on three main dimensions of disability:

- body function and structure
- activity
- and participation.

Environmental and personal factors separate to the actual impairment are seen to influence the person’s ability to complete particular activities or participate in routine social activities. The impairment on its own is only half the story.

Some of the terms you may encounter relating to the ICF are:

- **Disability** is an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions.
- **Impairments** are problems in body function or structure such as a significant deviation or loss.
- **Activity Limitations** are difficulties an individual may have in executing activities at a personal level such as lifting, holding, walking, etc.
- **Participation Restrictions** are problems an individual may experience in involvement in life situations at a social level such as education, work or leisure.

Another expression you may come across is the term ‘special needs’. Although you may see this term used in numerous publications it is not the preferred term because the word ‘special’ implies that the child is ‘uncommon’ or ‘unusual’, and by labelling the child as ‘special’ we are setting them apart from other children. This reinforces the negative concept of ‘normal versus abnormal’ and therefore does not uphold the basic principles of inclusion. The term ‘special education’ however, is still widely used, and refers to the teaching of children with disabilities or additional learning needs.

You may also have heard or read about children who have a ‘developmental delay’. This is a general term with a wide range of applications. A child may be considered ‘developmentally delayed’ if:

- their development is below the expected level for their chronological age
- there is a delayed achievement of one or more developmental milestones