



Clinical Service Provision Policy

Philosophy

Playful Connections Speech Pathology acknowledges that early intervention is the best way to support the development and wellbeing of young children with a disability or developmental delay. Playful Connections provides targeted services to children aged 0-6 (5 years, 11 months) to ensure continuing availability of early intervention services to all children and families seeking Speech Pathology support.

Playful Connections Speech Pathology follows the principles of Early Intervention as detailed in ECIA – Best Practice in Early Childhood Intervention National Guidelines (2015).

Referral Process

Clients may be referred to Playful Connections Speech Pathology by any of the following individuals:

- Parent/caregiver
- Childcare/Education provider
- GP/Paediatrician
- Allied Health Professional (e.g. Occupational Therapist)
- NDIS Plan Manager or Early Intervention Provider

Referral information and intake forms can be found on Playful Connections website (www.playfulconnectionsspeechpathology.com.au)

Clinical/Service Priorities

Playful Connections Speech Pathology will predominantly endeavour to contact clients in order of referral date. At discretion of Playful Connections Speech Pathology clinicians, children may be seen outside of referral order dependent on level of clinical need and current age. This decision will be based on expertise and experience of senior clinician and service programs available at any given time.

Client Access

Following the Early Intervention approach and focus as detailed above, Playful Connections Speech Pathology maintains strict age limits when it comes to referrals, assessments and service provision for individual therapy support. This policy allows for continued access to Early Intervention for young children.

Referrals: Children aged between 0 and 3 years 6 months (3;6) may be referred to Playful Connections Speech Pathology for individual therapy. Children over the age of 3;6 will not be accepted as new referrals for therapy support but families are able to access consultative support as detailed below.

Consultation/Assessments:

- All children aged between 0 and 3;6 will be eligible to receive an initial consultation or assessment when an appointment becomes available.
- Children who are over the age of 3;6 but have been on the therapy waiting list prior to turning 3;6 will be offered a consult/assessment appointment and will be supported to access alternative service options.
- All families of children aged 0-8 are able to access one-off consultations from Playful Connections in the areas of:
 - Early Language Development Support
 - Neurodiversity Affirming Approaches
 - AAC introduction, support and guidance
 - Classroom/School advocacy support
 - Disability/Neurodivergent specific support in problem solving challenges
 - Developing understanding of supports children may need
- Playful Connections does not offer one-off assessments or consults for speech sound disorders, literacy concerns, stuttering or voice issues. These areas require intensive, targeted intervention which Playful Connections is unable to offer. Families will be supported to access alternative services.

Active clients: Children can remain active clients of Playful Connections Speech Pathology and access therapy services (as available) until the age of 5 years, 11 months (or until the completion of their first year of schooling if their 6th birthday is prior to December). Once children transition to school they will

begin to be supported through a discharge planning process and will be able to access a maximum of fortnightly sessions.

Clinical Focus and Planning

Caregivers will be asked to work with their Speech Pathologist at regular intervals to create a specific therapy management plan for their child. This plan will be goal orientated and will be used to help determine focus of therapy sessions, style of service provision, frequency of service provision and to eventually plan for discharge.

Therapy may be offered in "blocks" of support to allow for targeted focus on specific goals as well breaks from therapy in order to generalise skills and build capacity of parents/educators. Breaks may also be encouraged depending on current cognitive load for children (e.g. attending numerous therapies, commencing new childcare/education environment, family changes etc).

Playful Connections takes the approach that a diagnosis does not necessarily equal the need for therapy supports. Each child and family's individual goals and needs will be taken into account and supports will be planned accordingly.