



4.1 EARLY CHILDHOOD SUPPORTS POLICY

Wagtail Therapy
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Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to set out Wagtail Therapy's approach to providing Early Childhood Supports. Wagtail Therapy is committed to providing specialised therapy supports and services, aligned with principles of best practice, for infants and young children with disability and/or developmental delay, and their families, in order to promote development, wellbeing and community participation.

Scope

This policy relates to all Wagtail Therapy activities and applies to all employees, contractors and others who may act on behalf of Wagtail Therapy.

This Policy reflects requirements in:

- NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators 2020
- NDIS Act 2013
- ECIA National Guidelines – Best Practice in Early Childhood Intervention 2016
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1990
- UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities 2006

Outcomes

Wagtail Therapy subscribes to achieving the following outcomes for all Early Childhood Intervention clients:

1. The Child - Each child participant accesses supports that promote and respect their legal and human rights, support their development of functional skills, and enable them to participate meaningfully and be included in everyday activities with their peers.
2. The Family - Each family receives family-centred supports that are culturally inclusive, responsive, and focus on their strengths.
3. Inclusion - Each participant accesses supports that engage their natural environments and enable inclusive and meaningful participation in their family and community life.
4. Collaboration - Each participant receives coordinated supports from a collaborative team comprising their family, the provider and other relevant providers, to facilitate their development and address the family's needs and priorities.
5. Capacity Building - Each participant receives supports that build the knowledge, skills and abilities of the family and other collaborating providers in order to support the child's learning and development.
6. Evidence - Each participant receives evidence-informed supports from providers with quality standards and validated practice.
7. Outcome Based Approach - Each participant receives supports that are outcome-based and goal-focused.

Principles

Early Childhood Supports – Early Intervention

Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) is the process of providing specialised support and services for infants and young children with disability and/or developmental delay, and their families, in order to promote development, well-being and community participation (ecia.org.au).

ECI practitioners work in partnership with parents/caregivers, families and other significant stakeholders to enhance their knowledge, skills and supports to meet the needs of the child, optimise the child's learning and development, and the child's ability to participate in family and community life. Wagtail Therapy acknowledges Reimagine Australia, formally Early Childhood Intervention Australia (ECIA), as the peak body for early childhood intervention in Australia and subscribes to the best practices outlined in the ECIA National Guidelines – Best Practice in Early Childhood Intervention 2016.

Early Intervention 7 Key Best Practice Principles



Wagtail Therapy supports and designs service delivery that are inclusive of the following 7 Key Best Practice Principles as outlined by ECIA and endorsed by the NDIA:

1. Infants and toddlers learn best through everyday experiences and interactions with familiar people in familiar contexts
2. All families, with the necessary supports and resources, can enhance their children's learning and development.
3. The primary role of the service provider in early intervention is to work with and support the family members and caregivers in a child's life.
4. The early intervention process, from initial contacts through to transition, must be dynamic and individualised to reflect the child's and family members' preferences, learning styles and cultural beliefs
5. Individual Family Service Plan outcomes must be functional and based on children's and families' needs and priorities
6. The family's priorities, needs and interests are addressed most appropriately by a primary provider who represents and receives team and community support.
7. Interventions with young children and family members must be based on explicit principles, validated practices, best available research and relevant laws and regulations

Procedure

Wagtail Therapy works collaboratively with the child, family and other stake holders to ensure that the best family centred outcomes for the child are achieved. All families/caregivers of early intervention clients are assisted to decide the most appropriate choice of therapy models (transdisciplinary or key worker model) to suit their family needs and have ability to review their decision periodically. All families/caregivers of early intervention clients are given the choice to participate in building their Individual Support Plan.

The Child

The following procedures are implemented to ensure that Wagtail Therapy meets its policy objective that each child participant accesses supports that promote and respect their legal and human rights, support their development of functional skills, and enable them to participate meaningfully and be included in everyday activities with their peers.

- Treat all children and their families/carers with dignity and respect.
- Uphold the rights of clients and their families/carers to express their views, choices and concerns, in relation to the service and effects it has on their lives.
- Recognise the role of families, carers and other advocates in safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of people with disabilities.
- Ensure that staff does not speak about clients/family members in front of them, but always discuss issues with clients/family members.
- Support clients and their families/carers to make decisions about their lives by providing accurate, timely information about their rights and responsibilities, and the responsibilities of the service.
- Work to prevent, as far as possible; any abuse, neglect, exploitation or other harm to its clients and their families/carers.
- When it is made aware of any breach of human rights of a client or family/carer; respond promptly with strategies to address the issue; including reporting incidents and putting safeguards in place. (1.5 Policy on Freedom from Violence, Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation and Discrimination)
- Provide clients and their families/carers with information about other supports, and when needed, access to advocacy support and/or referral to legal advice.
- Respect the privacy of children with disabilities and their families/carers.
- Keep personal information about children and families/carers confidential.
- Provide services in ways that pose the least restrictions on children and their families/carers; whilst still implementing safeguards to ensure their well-being is protected.
- Ensure staff attend human rights and Zero Tolerance of Abuse training on a regular basis.



- Ensure staff are trained in identifying and reporting risk to children and child abuse
- Staff will facilitate the active involvement of parents, caregivers and support networks to aid in the child's development
- Child abuse and incident reporting procedures are readily visible and available in the office and electronically online.

Reporting of children at risk or experiencing abuse

Wagtail Therapy takes the responsibility of risk reporting for children seriously and follows all state and national reporting legislation and requirements. Staff who have concerns regarding the safety of a child are to immediately report their concerns to their Director who will direct them to fill out an Incident Form and assist them through the relevant reporting process outlined in 2.2 Incident Reporting Policy.

All circumstances that are deemed reportable will be reported to the NDIS Commission (if funded by NDIS) as well as to the WA Department of Communities, Child Protection and Family Support (CPFS). Reports to CPFS will be made via phone call to the Central Intake Team on 1800 273 889 or via email cpduty@communities.wa.gov.au during working hours or the Crisis Care Unit 1800 199 008 after hours.

If a child is in imminent danger or in a life-threatening situation the Western Australian Police will be called by dialling 000.

The Family

The following procedures are implemented to ensure that Wagtail Therapy meets its policy objective that each family receives family-centred supports that are culturally inclusive, responsive, and focus on their strengths.

- Each family have the opportunity to decide the level of involvement they wish in the decision making for their child
- Parents have ultimate responsibility for their child
- Each family member is treated with respect
- The strengths and needs of all family members are supported and encouraged
- Family members are involved in all levels of support from support planning, service delivery and service review.
- All families are given the option of service delivery models from Key Worker Model to
- Transdisciplinary Models and can change between the two or have variations of both depending on what best suits the family.
- Each family is given the choice of creating an Individual Service Plan for their child, with the plan remaining flexible and being reviewed every quarter.
- Therapy supports are delivered in a location best suited to the family and the child, and can be at home, early education providers, school or in the local community.
- All supports are culturally inclusive and respectful of the family's cultural beliefs. Further culturally responsive policies can be found in 1.3 Policy on Individual Values and Beliefs (ATSI)
- Use of interpreters and translation of information in other languages are provided when needed.
- All plans and programs are created with the family's strengths and routines in mind so that they can be easily integrated into the child's everyday routine.
- Wagtail Therapy offers various service models that are socio-economic inclusive, including the use of home programs, community resources and training of key stakeholders to deliver services.
- Wagtail Therapy provides information to families around local formal and informal supports that they can utilise in addition to therapeutic supports. These are delivered on an individual basis during therapy sessions, during the onboarding process and distributed on social media.

Inclusion



The following procedures are implemented to ensure that Wagtail Therapy meets its policy objective of ensuring that each participant accesses supports that engage their natural environments and enable inclusive and meaningful participation in their family and community life. At Wagtail Therapy:

- Staff are provided with training in person/family centred practices and are familiar with the concepts of community inclusion.
- Clients and their families/carers (when appropriate) have been involved from the outset in designing the individual service plan and have been provided with information about the opportunities for inclusion in their local community.
- Wagtail Therapy collaborates closely with the broader community and promotes opportunities for members to become involved in a wide range of community activities.
- Wagtail Therapy works proactively with community-based groups and services to improve the access of their programs and activities.
- Therapy services are delivered in the child's natural environment ie homes, schools, Early Childhood Centres, and in the child's local community.
- All plans and programs are created with the family's strengths and routines in mind so that they can be easily integrated into the child's everyday routine.
- All plans and programs are designed in collaboration with the family and key stakeholders of the child where appropriate.
- Therapists gain a thorough understanding of the family's community and support agencies and encourage them to strengthen and maintain those supports.
- All plans and programs are designed around participating in the family's routines and in natural learning environments.
- Each family is given the choice of creating an Individual Service Plan for their child, with the plan remaining flexible and being reviewed every quarter.
- Staff participate in collaborative meetings as required and as directed by the family.
- All goals are meaningful and outcome based and formed in collaboration with the family and other stakeholders.

Collaboration

The following procedures are implemented to ensure that Wagtail Therapy meets its policy objective of ensuring that each child receives coordinated supports from a collaborative team comprising their ,the provider and other relevant providers, to facilitate their development and address the family's needs and priorities. At Wagtail Therapy:

- Family members and professionals work together as a collaborative, integrated, coordinated team with the common goal of facilitating participation of a child and family in everyday community environments.
- All families are given the choice of model of service delivery including Key Worker Model and Transdisciplinary Team Model or a variation of both to suit the needs of the child and family.
- During support planning the therapists work with the family to determine what are the most important outcomes for the child and the family, which at times may be different to the goals the therapist has identified.
- Staff involved in Key Worker Model of support delivery will be receive training and be competent in understanding child development.
- Families are provided with information on best practice in Early Intervention and the Key Worker Model of support delivery.
- Where families chose to have a Key Worker and need specific expertise, the key worker will liaise with the family to bring in other team members as appropriate.
- Families can transfer between models of service delivery at any time
- Communication with the family and other collaborating providers is open and continuous and with respect to the family's needs and wishes.
- Collaborative meetings can be face to face, or remotely over the phone or on Zoom or Teams



software.

- Feedback from the family is on a continuous basis as well as during times of formal review when the Individual Support Plans are reviewed.
- All communication with internal and external collaborative team members will be with the consent of the family.
- Wagtail Therapists work closely with the family and collaborating providers to share information, knowledge and skills including upskilling of those caregivers and stakeholders as directed by the family.
- To enable collaboration and at times continuity of service, with consent of the care giver, other stakeholders involved with the family will be detailed on the child's Individual Support Plan.
- Where it is identified that the needs of the family will be best suited with another service provider, Wagtail Therapy will participate in a collaborative handover process to make a smooth transition. (see 2.9 Withdrawal, Termination or Transfer of Service Policy).
- Where other therapists need to take over the Key Worker or another therapy position with the family, a written and verbal handover will be given as well as shadowing opportunities to make the transition seamless.
- Where families exit Wagtail Therapy, feedback will be sought from the family to assist with service quality improvement.
- All therapy support and programs will be aimed at upskilling and building the capacity of the care giver so that future reliance on therapy is decreased.

Capacity Building

The following procedures are implemented to ensure that Wagtail Therapy meets its policy objective of ensuring that each child and caregiver receives supports that build the knowledge, skills and abilities of the family and other collaborating providers in order to support the child's learning and development. At Wagtail Therapy:

- Staff work with each child's support network including parents, teachers, education assistants, carers, and mentors to build their capacity to assist the child in achieving functional outcomes that are identified in the support plan.
- Staff attend Individual Education Plan meetings, family, and stakeholder meetings, NDIS reviews as required and requested by the family.
- Therapists work collaboratively with families to identify functional outcomes and create an Individual Support Plan to assist in the achievement of those meaningful goals.
- Families where the child is seen at school are given regular feedback on the progress of the child and parent meetings are offered during the school holidays via in-person meetings, phone or over Zoom.
- Parents are offered additional education and capacity building sessions over the school holidays
- Therapists, with family approval, deliver sessions in the locations where they have the most capacity building impact on the child and caregivers.
- Therapists conduct sessions alongside other services providers where possible to provide education and role modelling and assist the other service provider in achieving the child's functional outcomes.
- Therapists use principles of adult education and role modelling when working with caregivers and other team members to achieve functional outcomes for their clients.
- Therapists work with caregivers to build their confidence with understanding how their family routines and every day activities can support their child.
- Therapists incorporate the child's functional outcomes into the family's everyday routines and in their natural environments.



- Therapists have discussions with families to identify how to best incorporate home therapy and practice into their routines.
- Therapists take a strengths-based approach to service delivery to build on the capacity of the parent as well as the child.
- Therapists work to understand the family culture to ensure the appropriateness and sustainability of therapy interventions and education.
- Therapists use coaching, capacity building supports and collaborative teamwork to build the capacity of the child, family and collaborating providers.
- Therapists continually review goals with the child and family and update them as required on an informal continual basis and formally at Individual Service Plan reviews.
- Regular feedback is sought from children and caregivers informally after every session and formally periodically throughout the year to assist in service improvement.
- Formal feedback is sought during the annual reviews of Individual Support Plans
- Families and service providers are asked to provide feedback on service delivery at any stage of their service and can be done so through speaking to their therapist or online through the contact form on the Wagtail Therapy website. See 2.1 Complaints and Feedback Policy for further information.
- Therapists engage in a supervision at least monthly.

Evidence Informed Practice

The following procedures are implemented to ensure that Wagtail Therapy meets its policy objective of ensuring that each child receives evidence-informed supports from providers with quality standards and validated practice. At Wagtail Therapy:

- Therapists deliver intervention strategies based on explicit principles, validated practices, and best available research.
- Therapists attend external professional development opportunities to enable the delivery of quality, evidence-based supports.
- Therapists attend monthly supervision to ensure their knowledge and skills are maintained through ongoing self-reflection and self-assessment.
- Therapists are required to meet their governing registration bodies (Allied Health Practitioner Regulation Agency or Speech Pathology Australia) professional development criteria for registration as well as their codes of conduct and best practice.
- Where targeted or specific intervention is required, supports are provided through the context of family centred principles, inclusive of coaching and are incorporated into everyday routines and settings.
- Therapists only provide support where they have appropriate information, knowledge, skills and expertise in order to deliver quality supports to the family.

Outcomes Based Approach

The following procedures are implemented to ensure that Wagtail Therapy meets its policy objective of ensuring that each participant receives supports that are outcome-based and goal focused. At Wagtail Therapy:

- Functional outcomes for the child and family are discussed in the onboarding and assessment phases of commencing with clients as well as throughout the service experience.
- Functional outcomes and goals are detailed in the child's Individual Support Plan after discussion with family, caregivers and other providers where relevant.



- If the family have elected not to have an Individual Support Plan, functional goals and outcomes are formed collaboratively and detailed on assessment forms, progress notes and Progress Reports.
- Assessment of the child includes in-person assessment or phone interviews with significant care givers and service providers before goals are formulated and agreed upon.
- Individual Support Plans, when agreed upon, and other resources are provided to the family in the language, mode of communication and terms they are likely to understand.
- Functional outcomes, formulated in collaboration with the family are designed to support the child's meaningful participation in family and community life.
- Assessment, intervention planning and outcomes are for the child are measured and evaluated regularly and continual feedback if given to the family in their preferred choice of communication in language that the family/care giver can understand.
- NDIS Progress Reports, and therapy programs are provided to, and discussed with the family so that they are meaningful to and understood by the family.
- Therapist's document and discuss with the family any barriers that prevent goal achievement in an effort to help overcome them to enhance success of the child and family.
- Wagtail staff are trained in using the ICF model as well as outcome-based goal setting and reporting.

Review

This Policy will be reviewed on a two yearly basis. However, if at any time where change is identified as being needed through legislative changes or service requirements, the Policy will be amended accordingly. This Policy will remain in force after its review period if not reviewed, or until changed or withdrawn.