



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment
and Workplace Relations

Office of
Early Childhood Education
& Child Care



Inclusion and Professional Support Program

Program Guidelines For

Inclusion Support Agencies
National Inclusion Support Subsidy Provider
Professional Support Coordinators
Indigenous Professional Support Units

2009-2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS	4
FOREWORD.....	5
ABOUT THE GUIDELINES	7
1. Purpose of Guidelines	7
2. Structure of Guidelines	7
SECTION A	9
INCLUSION AND PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAM	9
A1. IPSP Philosophy.....	9
A2. IPSP Objectives.....	10
A3. IPSP Key Principles	10
A4. IPSP Model.....	11
A5. IPSP Eligibility	13
A6. Roles and Responsibilities	14
A7. IPSP Program Planning	14
A8. IPSP Performance Monitoring and Compliance.....	14
A9. Complaints procedures	15
A10. IPSP Continuous Improvement & Evaluation Strategies	16
INCLUSION SUPPORT PROGRAM	17
SECTION B	18
INCLUSION SUPPORT AGENCIES	18
B1. Description	18
B2. Objectives	19
B3. How to Access the ISAs	19
B4. Roles and Responsibilities	19
B5. Planning and Coordination	21
B6. Networking and Collaboration	22
B7. Budget and Performance Monitoring.....	22
B8. Progress Reporting.....	23

SECTION C	24
INCLUSION SUPPORT SUBSIDY	24
C1. Description	24
C2. What the Inclusion Support Subsidy can be used for	24
C3. How to access the ISS	26
C4. How to apply for the Inclusion Support Subsidy	27
C5. The Claims Process	35
PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAM	39
Professional Development and Support	39
SECTION D	42
PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT COORDINATORS	42
D1. Description	42
D2. Objectives	42
D3. How to access the PSCs	43
D4. Roles and Responsibilities	43
D5. Communication Activities	44
D6. Priority areas for Professional Development and Support	44
D7. Professional Support Service Providers	45
D8. Professional Support Fee Structure	46
D9. Planning and Coordination	46
D10. Networking and Collaboration	47
D11. Budget and Performance Monitoring	48
D12. Progress Reporting	49
SECTION E	50
INDIGENOUS PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT UNIT	50
E1. Description	50
E2. Objectives	50
E3. How to access the IPSUs	51
E4. Roles and Responsibilities	51
E5. Priority areas for Professional Development and Support	52
E6. Planning and Coordination	53
E7. Networking and Collaboration	54
E8. Participation in IPSP Forums	54

E9.	Professional Development for IPSU Staff	55
E10.	Budget and Performance Monitoring	55
E11.	Progress Reporting.....	56
	SECTION F.....	58
	INCLUSION AND PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT RESOURCES.....	58
F1.	Service Support Plans	58
F2.	Flexible Support Funding.....	65
F3.	Bicultural Support.....	71
F4.	Specialist Equipment.....	73
F5.	General Resources Library	75
	APPENDICES.....	76
	APPENDIX A: PSC AND IPSU CONTACT DETAILS	77
	APPENDIX B: NISSP AND ISA CONTACT DETAILS	78
	APPENDIX C: GLOSSARY.....	82

Acronyms

BSP	Bicultural Support Program
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DEEWR	The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
EYLF	Early Years Learning Framework
FSF	Flexible Support Funding
IPSP	Inclusion and Professional Support Program
ISA	Inclusion Support Agency
ISF	Inclusion Support Facilitator
ISS	Inclusion Support Subsidy
IPSU	Indigenous Professional Support Unit
NISSP	National Inclusion Support Subsidy Provider
NQF	National Quality Framework
PSC	Professional Support Coordinator
PSSP	Professional Support Service Provider
SSP	Service Support Plan

Foreword

The Australian Government's agenda for early childhood education and child care focuses on providing all Australian families with high-quality, accessible and affordable integrated early childhood education and child care. The agenda has a strong emphasis on connecting with schools to ensure all Australian children are fully prepared for learning and life. Investing in the health, education, development and care of all our children benefits children and their families, our communities and the economy, and is critical to lifting workforce participation and delivering the Government's productivity agenda.

The Australian Government is committed to improving access to quality services that support early childhood learning and care for children through a national quality framework, agreed national standards, investment in infrastructure, and support for parents, carers and the workforce. High quality early childhood learning and care services will ensure the best opportunities for all children.

The Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP), a component of the Australian Government's Child Care Services Support Program, is integral to promoting and supporting the Government's National Quality Agenda and supporting child care services to be inclusive of all children. The IPSP will support:

- child care workers to have access to high quality, evidence-based professional development and support
- Indigenous child care services to have access to relevant high quality professional development and support
- child care services to be better informed about quality issues including knowledge of the government's National Quality Agenda and Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and have strategies in place to address them
- the strengthening of relationships between current service providers and the development of integrated approaches to service delivery
- the capacity of child care services to meet the needs of all children, including children with additional needs
- the development of an evidence base in relation to what constitutes good practice in inclusion support and professional development.

The IPSP will support services to understand and work actively to adopt and improve their practice in line with the EYLF. The IPSP encourages innovation and will help drive change, improve staff skills and encourage continuous improvement as required by the National Quality Standards, which are currently being finalised by the Australian Government in collaboration with the state and territory governments.

The IPSP will use a strengths-based approach to build capacity and facilitate positive change in child care services in a way that results in inclusive environments and enhancements to the quality of service provision. Strengths-based practice is a process whereby IPSP service providers are able to engage with and assist child care services identify their needs and solutions. It builds on existing capacities of child care services and the successes that have already been achieved in delivering quality child care.

The IPSP comprises the following elements:

- **Inclusion Support Program (ISP)**, funds the Inclusion Support Agencies (ISAs) and National Inclusion Support Subsidy Provider (NISSP) to support child care services to improve access and inclusion for children with additional needs.
- **Professional Support Program (PSP)**, which funds the Professional Support Coordinators (PSCs) and Indigenous Professional Support Units (IPSUs) to provide professional development, advice or resources to assist child care services to provide quality child care.

The IPSP funds eight state/territory based PSCs, eight IPSUs, an ISA in each of the 67 ISA regions across Australia and the NISSP.

About the Guidelines

1. Purpose of Guidelines

These Guidelines are for information and use by the Australian Government's Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP) service providers, that is:

- Inclusion Support Agencies (ISAs)
- National Inclusion Support Subsidy Provider (NISSP)
- Professional Support Coordinators (PSCs) and
- Indigenous Professional Support Units (IPSUs).

These Guidelines are to be read in conjunction with the relevant Funding Agreement. The Department reserves the right to amend these guidelines from time to time by whatever means it may determine at its absolute discretion. Such amendments may be necessary to reflect Australian Government Priorities. Funding Recipients are advised that any changes to the Guidelines and their subsequent effects will be advised online at www.deewr.gov.au/Earlychildhood.

For more general information about the IPSP please refer to the website:

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/EarlyChildhood/Programs/ChildCareforServices/SupportFamilyCCS/Pages/InclusionSupportProgram.aspx>

2. Structure of Guidelines

Section A outlines the Program elements that are common to all components of the Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP). They include:

- IPSP philosophy and objectives
- IPSP model and key principles that underpin service delivery
- Strategies for facilitating integration in the IPSP
- National Quality Agenda
- Eligibility requirements for IPSP support
- IPSP program planning
- Continuous improvement and evaluation strategies

Sections B and C comprise the Guidelines for the providers of the **Inclusion Support Program** which include:

- Section B – Inclusion Support Agencies (ISAs)
- Section C – Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS)

Sections D and E comprise the Guidelines for the providers of the **Professional Support Program** (PSP) which include:

- Section D – Professional Support Coordinators (PSCs)
- Section E – Indigenous Professional Support Units (IPSUs)

Section F comprises Guidelines for the application and use of Inclusion and Professional Support Program resources that are available for child care services including:

- Service Support Plan (SSP)
- Flexible Support Funding (FSF)
- Bicultural Support Program
- Specialist Equipment
- General Resource Library

The **Appendices** comprise:

- Professional Support Coordinator (PSC), Indigenous Professional Support Unit (IPSU), Inclusion Support Agency (ISA) and National Inclusion Support Subsidy Provider (NISSP) contact details
- Glossary

SECTION A

Inclusion and Professional Support Program

A1.	<u>IPSP Philosophy</u>	9
A2.	<u>IPSP Objectives</u>	10
A3.	<u>IPSP Key Principles</u>	10
A4.	<u>IPSP Model</u>	11
A5.	<u>IPSP Eligibility</u>	13
A6.	<u>Roles and Responsibilities</u>	14
A7.	<u>IPSP Program Planning</u>	14
A8.	<u>IPSP Performance Monitoring and Compliance</u>	14
A9.	<u>Complaints procedures</u>	15
A10.	<u>IPSP Continuous Improvement & Evaluation Strategies</u>	16

A1. IPSP Philosophy

A large body of literature has established that the provision of high quality early childhood education and care has a positive effect on children’s development and transition to school.

Furthermore, research reveals that universal child care programs that serve all children provide a stronger foundation for children’s developmental outcomes. The provision of inclusive child care is thus considered to be a significant indicator of quality.

Inclusion philosophy for child care services is based on:

- universal access for all children
- services being ready for children
- support being based on the needs of the total care environment
- staff developing the capacity to meet all children’s needs.

The IPSP promotes the principles of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*¹ and the Australian Government’s Access and Equity Strategy² and Social Inclusion Agenda³.

¹ The objects [among many] of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* are:

- “(a) to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against persons on the ground of disability in the areas of:
 - (i) work, accommodation, education, access to premises, clubs and sport; and
 - (iv) the administration of Commonwealth laws and programs; and
- (b) to ensure, as far as practicable, that persons with disabilities have the same rights to equality before the law as the rest of the community; and
- (c) to promote recognition and acceptance within the community of the principle that persons with disabilities have the same fundamental rights as the rest of the community.”

A2. IPSP Objectives

The IPSP promotes and maintains high quality care and inclusion for all children in eligible child care services, by facilitating skill development of carers and increasing the capacity of child care services through the provision of professional development, advice and inclusion support.

The IPSP is an integrated approach to supporting and enhancing the inclusion and professional development needs of child care services and promotes good practice and continuous improvement in service delivery.

IPSP aims to provide and promote:

- support that enhances the quality of child care services including professional development and workforce development
- access to the range of resources staff need to provide care for all children
- access to additional staff when required
- flexible programs that are responsive to all children
- the readiness of child care services to become more inclusive.

A3. IPSP Key Principles

The following principles will underpin the delivery of the IPSP:

- **Equity of Access**—eligible child care services, regardless of their geographic location or service type, will have equitable access to support services provided by the IPSP.
- **Inclusion**—the IPSP supports child care services to be inclusive of all children.
- **Professional Workforce**—the IPSP will support an increase in the professionalism of the child care workforce and will be proactive in meeting the needs of the child care workforce and child care service management.
- **Quality**—the IPSP assists child care services to provide quality child care by actively promoting the National Quality Framework.
- **National Consistency**—child care services across Australia can expect to have access to IPSP services that are delivered in an efficient, flexible, culturally appropriate and timely manner.
- **Integrated Approach**—IPSP service providers will develop organisational relationships that support an integrated approach to service delivery.

² The Australian Government aims to achieve fairer and more accessible government services and programs through its Access and Equity strategy. The strategy seeks to promote fairness and responsiveness in the design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of government services in a culturally diverse society.

³ The Government's Social Inclusion agenda encourages all Australians to participate in public life and the community. Refer to website: <http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>.

- **Capacity Building and Strengths-Based Approach**—the IPSP service providers will use a strengths-based approach to support child care services to build their capacity to provide high quality child care.

A4. IPSP Model

The Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP) aims to improve the capacity of child care services to deliver quality child care. This is achieved through analysis and reflection and is usually facilitated by agencies skilled in organisational change and development. The IPSP is made up of two programs:

- the **Professional Support Program (PSP)** provides professional development and support to build the skills of the child care workforce to enable them to provide high quality child care. The PSP provides funding for the Professional Support Coordinators (PSCs) and the Indigenous Professional Support Units (IPSUs) in each state/territory to support the implementation of the National Quality Framework. It also supports the provision of professional development which is an ongoing process that promotes the systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of skills and knowledge. It also helps develop the interpersonal qualities necessary for child care workers to carry out their responsibilities and enhance their performance.
- the **Inclusion Support Program (ISP)** which aims to remove the barriers to access for children with additional needs through provision of inclusion support. This is achieved via the Inclusion Support Agencies (ISAs) who provide advice and guidance to child care services in designated ISA regions regarding access to training, Flexible Support Funding (FSF) and Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS). The ISA may recommend that services access resources, bicultural support and specialist equipment which are administered by the Professional Support Coordinators (PSCs) to better facilitate a child's inclusion to a service.

IPSP functions operate in an integrated way to ensure quality inclusion and professional development assistance to Child Care Services. **National and State/Territory IPSP forums** facilitated by DEEWR will provide the mechanisms for achieving greater cohesion between the IPSP service providers, to support the implementation of the National Quality Framework (NQF) at the state and territory levels and provide an opportunity to discuss and respond to the gaps in the child care sector.

In particular, the State and Territory IPSP forums will:

- review program activities and the extent to which they are meeting their objectives
- showcase good practice and share information on learning experiences
- facilitate linkages with programs and professionals outside the IPSP
- take a strategic approach to the IPSP within the context of the National Quality Framework.

The forums will help the sector understand gaps and challenges facing child care services in metropolitan, rural and remote areas, facilitate a more integrated approach to service delivery and promote opportunities for collaboration.

The Department supports the establishment of **national alliances for the PSCs, ISAs and IPSUs** to assist in developing a cohesive vision of each organisation's roles and responsibilities, recognising current and future professional development opportunities, identifying opportunities for innovation in the sector, and facilitating the sharing of good practice.

These alliances will:

- facilitate communication and information sharing between ISAs, PSCs and IPSUs and develop a shared vision for the delivery of inclusion and professional support for the child care sector
- promote nationally consistent and collaborative approaches to inclusion and professional development and support for the child care sector
- provide national leadership on inclusion and professional development and promote the implementation of the EYLF and the NQF in the child care sector
- develop strategies for continuous improvement and share best practice approaches to inclusion and professional development
- identify and respond to issues that have national implications
- prepare an annual work plan that includes goals, outcomes and timeframes.

Hosting and location arrangements for alliance meetings will be rotated among IPSP providers. PSCs, IPSUs and ISAs must participate in or contribute to their respective alliance Meetings. The host and chair of meetings will:

- keep records of issues discussed
- note actions recommended and the responsible party for that action
- provide minutes and action items to members
- provide an overview report to DEEWR.

A5. IPSP Eligibility

Child care services eligible for support from the various elements of the IPSP are listed below⁴.

ISAs & PSCs

Child care services approved for Child Care Benefit (CCB), including:

- long day care services
- outside school hours care (including vacation care)
- family day care
- occasional care
- in-home care services.

Child care services funded under the Budget Based Funding Program, including:

- flexible/innovative services
- mobile child care services
- Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services
- Indigenous playgroups
- Indigenous outside school hours care and enrichment programs;
- crèches
- innovative child care service centres.

IPSUs

Indigenous child care services:

- flexible/innovative services
- mobile child care services
- Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (including those that are transitioning to Child Care Benefit)
- Indigenous playgroups
- Indigenous outside school hours care and enrichment programs
- crèches
- innovative child care service centres.

ISS⁵

Child care services:

Child care services approved for CCB, including:

- long day care services
- outside school hours care (including vacation care)
- family day care
- occasional care
- in-home care services.

Child care services funded under the Budget Based Funding Program, including:

- flexible/innovative services
- mobile child care services
- Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services
- Indigenous playgroups
- Indigenous outside school hours care and enrichment programs;
- crèches
- innovative child care service centres.

⁴ Australian Government services are services that receive funding under the Child Care Benefit Scheme or Budget Based Funding under the Child Care Services Support Program. Services that are not eligible for support under the IPSP include, but are not limited to: registered care, state and territory government funded early learning and care services, and state and territory government services such as occasional care, preschools and early intervention services.

⁵ ISS is subject to a two tiered eligibility process. For more information, refer to section C - ISS Guidelines.

A6. Roles and Responsibilities

Both the Department's National Office and the state/territory offices have management responsibility for the IPSP. The National Office is responsible for national program management, program objectives and priorities, including national reporting and evaluation. State/territory offices are responsible for the management of funding agreements with service providers and local service delivery issues.

Service providers are responsible for delivering inclusion support and professional development based on the principles described above and as outlined in their Funding Agreement.

Both the Department and service providers have a role in supporting good practice and maintaining linkages with service providers funded under the IPSP and in related programs.

A7. IPSP Program Planning

The IPSP supports a planned approach to program management and service delivery to ensure resources are targeted to areas of greatest need. A planned approach ensures the IPSP focuses on outcomes and provides clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the respective IPSP service providers in achieving these outcomes.

Program planning will be undertaken at the national, state/territory and service levels. The IPSP forums will contribute to the planning process by providing opportunities for strategic discussions.

A7.1 IPSP Needs Analysis

Effective planning is built on an analysis of the need for professional development and inclusion support, research and good practice. To ensure consistency in the IPSP data collection process and reduce duplication, the Department will develop a data collection framework in consultation with IPSP service providers to standardise the data collected from child care services. IPSP providers will implement new data collection processes as advised by the Department. The data collected through this process will be analysed nationally and used to inform policy based on measured changes and trends.

A8. IPSP Performance Monitoring and Compliance

The Department is responsible for ensuring that IPSP funding is expended in an efficient and transparent manner, and for monitoring the Funding Recipient's compliance with the terms of the Funding Agreement, in accordance with IPSP Funding Agreements. The Department's performance monitoring and compliance strategy to ensure the IPSP meets its program requirements will include: monitoring of performance reports, regular liaison with IPSP providers and monitoring visits.

Performance monitoring, in addition to meeting the Department's accountability requirements, is used to:

- determine how the IPSP is operating in each state/territory
- contribute to the performance information on the IPSP

- enhance opportunities for learning and performance improvement by the Department and the IPSP providers.

The monitoring process involves the analysis of progress reports by the Department and monitoring visits.

A8.1 Monitoring Visits

The monitoring visits will include:

- meetings with the IPSP providers to discuss their progress reports and any issues or questions arising from the reports. IPSP providers will provide examples of their work, for example, training or professional development calendars, resources, evaluations
- meetings with child care services that have received support from IPSP providers to gauge levels of satisfaction.

The Department will establish a rolling program of visits and provide advice to IPSP providers on the approach that will be taken in the monitoring process. On completing the monitoring visit, a report that includes actions arising will be prepared.

The Department will also use data from a range of other sources to assess the effectiveness of the IPSP.

A8.2 Progress and Expenditure Reports

Six Monthly Progress and Expenditure Reports will be submitted by IPSUs, PSCs, ISAs and the NISSP to the Department to provide information on program activities and demonstrate compliance with program requirements using the agreed templates. Those organisations must also submit Annual Audited Financial Acquittal Reports to the Department.

A9. Complaints procedures

IPSP service providers are required to establish effective complaints-handling and problem-solving mechanisms for eligible child care services to adopt to ensure timely and effective resolution of complaints. These mechanisms must inform child care services on the process for issuing a complaint, providing feedback to clients, and ensuring that issues arising from complaints are reported to management and are used to improve service delivery.

The mechanisms must also include the development and distribution of written information to service staff or sub-contractors about their rights and responsibilities in relation to the delivery of professional development and inclusion support.

A10. IPSP Continuous Improvement & Evaluation Strategies

To ensure the ongoing improvement of the IPSP, service providers must develop and implement internal systems to facilitate continuous improvement in their service delivery.

In addition, the Department will develop an evaluation strategy. This will include a methodology for an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the IPSP for 2009 - 2012 and the extent to which program objectives have been achieved. All IPSP service providers will be required to participate in the evaluation.

Inclusion Support Program

Inclusive early childhood education and child care programs are underpinned by values, policies and practices that support young children and their families regardless of ability, ethnic or Indigenous backgrounds to participate in a wide range of contexts and activities. Inclusive programs provide children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD), with disabilities and Indigenous children with a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships and development and learning that enables them to reach their full potential.

The provision of inclusive child care is an indicator of quality. Universal child care programs that serve all children provide a stronger foundation for developmental outcomes. For a child care service, the experience and knowledge gained from working with children from Indigenous or CALD backgrounds or children with a disability has been found to benefit all children in care and result in higher quality care.

The aim of the Inclusion Support Program is to remove the barriers to accessing child care that may be experienced by children with a disability, CALD backgrounds, and Indigenous children. It aims to promote and maintain high quality care that is free from discrimination, segregation and prejudice.

The program assists child care services with a range of practical supports, including advice, planning and resources, so that they are better able to provide all children with the opportunities to participate in activities that encourage learning and development within relationships with peers and adults and in a manner that reflects the interests and strengths of all children inclusive of physical, cultural and linguistic diversity.

The Inclusion Support Program comprises two main components, the Inclusion Support Agencies (ISAs) (refer section B) and the Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS) (refer section C).

Section B

Inclusion Support Agencies

B1.	<u>Description</u>	18
B2.	<u>Objectives</u>	19
B3.	<u>How to Access the ISAs</u>	19
B4.	<u>Roles and Responsibilities</u>	19
B5.	<u>Planning and Coordination</u>	21
B6.	<u>Networking and Collaboration</u>	22
B7.	<u>Budget and Performance Monitoring</u>	22
B8.	<u>Progress Reporting</u>	23

B1. Description

Inclusion Support Agencies (ISAs) are funded under the Inclusion Support Program to provide child care services with practical support that will help build their capacity to provide a quality inclusive environment for children with additional needs. Children with additional needs are those from the following priority groups:

- children with a disability, including children with high support needs
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds
- children with a refugee or humanitarian intervention background who have been subjected to torture and trauma, either in their country of origin or during their refugee experience
- Indigenous children

For the purposes of the IPSP, quality inclusive child care environments are those that:

- provide welcoming, accessible and engaging environments that are responsive to all children and their families
- use flexible programming approaches that are responsive to individual strengths, interests and needs
- build on and develop the strengths of the child care community (child, family, staff and community)
- work in partnership with families and respect their cultural values, needs and circumstances
- are well supported through networking with other relevant services and supports.

The Inclusion Support Program has established ISAs in 67 regions across Australia, including rural and remote localities.

B2. Objectives

The objective of ISAs is to assist child care services to build the knowledge and confidence they need to be able to offer a quality, inclusive child care environment to children with additional needs. This will enable children with additional needs to participate in the activities available in child care services and have the same opportunities as others to participate belong, develop and succeed.

In particular, ISAs aim to:

- promote and support access to quality child care
- help build the capacity of child care services to successfully include all children, including those with additional needs
- ensure inclusion support is delivered in a flexible manner and is responsive to the needs and priorities of child care services
- ensure inclusion support is delivered in an efficient and cost effective manner, and in accordance with these Guidelines.

B3. How to Access the ISAs

Eligible child care services (see section A5) who have enrolled, or are intending to enrol, a child with additional needs can contact their local ISA for assistance.

The contact details of all ISAs are at Appendix B.

B4. Roles and Responsibilities

B4.1 Support to child care services

ISAs are responsible for the provision of support to child care services that includes practical advice and access to a range of supports designed to strengthen the service's ability to create a quality care environment inclusive of all children. These supports include, but are not limited to, providing onsite assistance with developing SSPs, facilitating access to Specialist Equipment, General Resources Library, professional support, funding through FSF or ISS, and Bicultural Support.

In addition, the ISA will:

- identify policies and practices that facilitate inclusion of children with additional needs in child care settings
- assist child care services to develop, implement and sustain inclusive policies and practices
- respond to requests and referrals for inclusion support from child care services, PSCs and IPSUs
- assist child care services to develop SSPs (see section F1)
- provide or source information in response to identified needs
- assist services to link with relevant community groups, services and organisations
- support child care services to work in partnership with families and local support networks
- assist child care services to identify their professional development needs and opportunities in conjunction with the PSC and IPSU

- support services to engage in ongoing reflective practices and continuous improvement.

There are three areas against which the provision of inclusion support should be assessed by ISAs:

- technical quality - the degree of knowledge, skill and judgement the ISAs use to provide inclusion support to child care services
- accessibility - the ease with which child care services are able to access relevant and timely support from the ISA
- relevance - the degree to which the support is appropriate and meets the needs and priorities of child care services and leads to the implementation of inclusive policies and practices.

B4.2 Role of Inclusion Support Agencies in relation to Inclusion Support Subsidy

The ISA will assist the National Inclusion Support Subsidy Provider (NISSP) facilitate the implementation of the Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS) by:

- supporting child care services to develop Service Support Plans (SSPs)
- assisting child care services (once approved for ISS funding) to complete the review of SSPs to identify whether ISS is required for a further period of time
- promoting an awareness of, and responsiveness to, the identified priority groups within child care services
- assisting child care services with the preparation of Application Forms and other ISS forms
- providing information to the National ISS Provider (NISSP) as required.

B4.3 Flexible Support Funding (FSF)

ISAs are responsible for managing FSF and ensuring it is administered in a manner consistent with the FSF Guidelines (see section F2). ISAs are also responsible for monitoring FSF expenditure to ensure that FSF requests are managed and approved within their regional allocation.

ISAs are required to report on FSF expenditure in ISA Progress and Expenditure Reports and in their Audited Financial Acquittal Reports.

A key principle in the administration of FSF is that applications for funding are approved at a local level by the ISA. This reduces the level of administration and ensures greater responsiveness to local needs. ISAs must ensure that FSF expenditure is targeted appropriately across all eligible child care types.

All ISAs receive a FSF allocation as part of their funding agreement. This allocation is then paid to them on a six monthly basis, along with their program funds.

B4.4 Inclusion Support Facilitators

ISAs will employ Inclusion Support Facilitators (ISFs) to work at the local level with child care services. They are also responsible for ensuring ISFs have access to comprehensive orientation training about their role and to other professional development they require to successfully undertake their role.

ISFs will have the opportunity to participate in a professional development project that will be coordinated by the PSCs. The aim of the project is to support the development of the following competencies:

- guiding change in child care services
- child development and inclusive practice
- adult learning principles
- coaching and mentoring
- reflective practice
- strengths-based practice and capacity building approaches
- learning organisations
- innovation and change in child care theory and practice
- interdisciplinary team work and interagency collaboration
- family-centred practice
- cross-cultural competence.

B5. Planning and Coordination

ISAs are responsible for developing ISA Region Plans that document how inclusion support will be coordinated and delivered to all eligible child care services in their region. They will also demonstrate how ISAs plan to achieve the outcomes outlined in the ISA Funding Agreement. ISAs are required to develop their ISA Region Plans in consultation with local stakeholders.

The ISA Region Plans must incorporate:

- a regional needs analysis for ensuring that the ISA Region Plan is developed in consultation with relevant local stakeholders and reflects the needs of child care services in the region
- a continuous improvement strategy that identifies and addresses opportunities to build on and improve the service being delivered
- a client satisfaction strategy for receiving feedback on an annual basis from child care services on the quality of inclusion support provided
- a marketing strategy to ensure all eligible services and relevant stakeholders are aware of the services available through an ISA
- a complaints handling strategy that ensures complaints are effectively managed and resolved
- a stakeholder management strategy to ensure effective partnerships are built and maintained with all stakeholders in the region, including the PSC and IPSU

- a risk management strategy.

Implementation of the ISA Region Plan must commence on 1 July and end on 30 June the following year. Draft plans must be submitted to the Department for approval by 30 April each year.

B6. Networking and Collaboration

ISAs are responsible for establishing effective partnerships with all stakeholders, including the PSCs, IPSUs and regional networks. In particular, ISAs will work in collaboration with IPSUs to assist mainstream child care services to become culturally sensitive and inclusive of Indigenous children and their families. IPSUs may charge ISAs a fee for service for requests that have significant resource implications for the IPSU. Other requests for assistance will be provided free of charge.

An ISA may request the assistance of an IPSU to:

- provide advice on practices that are culturally appropriate and meet the needs of Indigenous children
- provide advice and strategies for meeting the needs of Indigenous children and of Indigenous child care workers.

B6.1 Participation in IPSP Forums and the ISA Alliance

ISAs will participate in the:

- national IPSP forum
- state and territory IPSP forums
- ISA Alliance.

Representation on the IPSP forums and ISA Alliance is yet to be determined. However, a model of representation will be developed that will be consultative and allow all ISAs the opportunity to contribute to the discussion and outcomes.

B7. Budget and Performance Monitoring

B7.1 Funding and Budget Management

ISAs are required to manage and monitor their budget and provide expenditure reports on the budget on a six-monthly basis.

B7.1.1 Uses of Funding

The majority of funding (70 per cent) within an ISA region must be used for direct service delivery. As a general rule, the ISA will be able to retain up to 30 per cent of the funding for the ISA region (excluding FSF) for administrative and coordination costs.

Administrative and coordination costs are considered to include costs associated with (but not limited to):

- recruiting, training and salaries for administrative staff
- setting up and maintaining an office, including insurance, rent, signage, general office equipment, telephone and internal costs
- monitoring and acquitting the total amount of funding allocated to the region, including Flexible Support Funding (FSF)
- reporting to the Department and participating in evaluation processes
- engaging and ongoing management and support of ISFs
- undertaking liaison and stakeholder management, including regional networking and communicating with state based PSCs and IPSUs, where applicable.

Funding cannot be used for overseas travel, outright purchase of a vehicle, major office renovation or building construction (capital works).

ISAs are required to specify how funding will be distributed for administrative, coordination and service delivery costs in their projected budgets.

All income generated from the activities funded under the ISAs, including bank interest, must be clearly identified in financial reports. This funding will be considered part of the ISAs' operating budget and must be used for the purpose of delivering inclusion support as per the funding agreement with the Department.

B8. Progress Reporting

ISAs will submit a Six Monthly ISA Progress and Expenditure Report to the Department. This report provides an overview of the progress of inclusion support in the region and includes qualitative and quantitative information about the ISA's performance against the ISA Funding Agreement and Region Plan. It also provides information on the expenditure of ISA funds against the approved budget.

ISAs are required to submit a six monthly ISA Progress and Expenditure Report to the Department on 31 January and 31 July each year.

Other reporting requirements such as the Annual Audited Financial Acquittal Reports are outlined in the ISA Funding Agreement.

B8.1 Monitoring visits

The Department will undertake monitoring visits with ISAs to meet with staff, discuss their progress reports and any issues or questions arising from the reports.

Section C

Inclusion Support Subsidy

C1.	<u>Description</u>	24
C2.	<u>What the Inclusion Support Subsidy can be used for</u>	24
C3.	<u>How to access the ISS</u>	26
C4.	<u>How to apply for the Inclusion Support Subsidy</u>	27
C5.	<u>The Claims Process</u>	35

C1. Description

From 1 January 2009, the Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS) is administered nationally by KU Children's Services, the National ISS Provider (NISSP). The ISS is paid to child care services to support the inclusion of a child or children with ongoing high support needs. The ISS is a contribution towards the costs associated with employing an additional child care worker. The ISS is limited to a flat hourly rate, which is determined by the Department and is indexed annually.

C2. What the Inclusion Support Subsidy can be used for

The NISSP will ensure that the ISS is used in the following ways:

- In centre based services:
 - ⇒ to engage an additional child care worker to increase the staff to child ratio when a child or children with ongoing high support needs are in care
- In home based services:
 - ⇒ as a Capacity Payment to Family Day Care carers in recognition of the additional care and attention required by children with ongoing high support needs in their care and the impact of this on the carer
 - ⇒ as an Additional Payment to In Home Care carers in recognition of the additional care and attention required by children with ongoing high support needs in their care and the impact of this on the carer
 - ⇒ to engage an additional child care worker to accompany a Family Day Care carer or In Home Care carer and children with ongoing high support needs on out-of-home excursions or other special activities, for example Family Day Care playgroups or vacation care excursions.

C2.1 Non-approved Purposes

The NISSP will ensure that the ISS is **not** used for the following purposes:

- specific assistance to the child to access non-mainstream child care, such as externally based early intervention programs, external one-to-one counselling, speech therapy, physiotherapy programs, therapeutic equipment (such as hearing aids, wheelchairs), medication and medical/nursing assistance

- to engage relief staff while carers attend training relating to the provision of medical/nursing assistance (see section C2.2)
- support services (not related to child care) for the family or the child care service, including transport for the child
- fitting of specialist equipment and/or training staff on the fitting of equipment
- settlement services for immigrants
- building modifications to the child care environment
- assistance for which funding is the responsibility of a state or territory Government or other body, such as respite care
- assistance to increase staffing levels in order to meet licensing requirements
- to fund staff to undertake medical/nursing assistance and procedures
- In home based care environments, ISS will not be paid for an additional carer in the home setting.

The list above is not intended to be exhaustive. Further clarification about “non approved purposes” will be provided by the National ISS Provider or the Department as required.

C2.2.1 Medical/Nursing Assistance

“Medical/nursing assistance” is defined as anything that is not covered by general first aid procedures and thus requires specific training. The NISSP will ensure that the ISS is **not** used to employ a carer to provide medical/nursing assistance or to engage relief staff while carers attend such training. It is the responsibility of child care services to ensure that an appropriately qualified person carries out these procedures.

Below are examples of medical/nursing assistance and procedures for which ISS funding cannot be used:

- catheterisation
- administration of insulin and monitoring of glucose levels
- tracheostomy suction and replacement
- administration of medication or feeding through a gastrostomy button and checking for blockages/displacement
- tube feeding
- administering rectal suppositories such as Valium
- oxygen administration and monitoring
- oral suctioning
- stomal therapy.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive. Further clarification about excluded procedures will be provided by the National ISS Provider or the Department as required.

C3. How to access the ISS

C3.1 Eligibility

The ISS is limited to annual capped allocations available under the Australian Government Child Care Support Program. Eligibility for the ISS does not mean an automatic entitlement to ISS funding.

The NISSP will apply the following criteria in assessing an Application for ISS funding:

- ensure the child who is attending the child care service has ongoing high support needs
- a Service Support Plan (SSP) has been developed to assess the child care service's inclusion capacity and the service and the ISF assesses from the SSP that there is justification to proceed to apply for the ISS funding.

C3.1.1 Eligible Child Care Services

The NISSP will ensure that the ISS is only available to child care services that are approved for Child Care Benefit (CCB) or funded under the Budget Based Funding Program (refer to section A5 – IPSP Eligibility).

C3.1.2 Children with ongoing high support needs

Children with demonstrated ongoing high support needs include:

- children with a diagnosed disability
- children who are undergoing continuing assessment of a disability
- children from a refugee or humanitarian intervention background who demonstrate behaviours symptomatic with having experienced or having been subject to torture or trauma in their country of origin or during their refugee experience.

ISS Application Forms must include current documentary evidence of the child's diagnosed disability, continuing assessment of a disability or refugee status.

Some children with a diagnosed disability may not require ongoing assistance in order to be included in the care environment. For example, a child might only require environmental modifications to be included in a care environment. Where children require specialist equipment for their inclusion, refer to section F4 – Specialist Equipment.

C3.1.3 Short-term and irregular utilisation in centre based care

For children with ongoing high support needs who attend child care on an occasional basis or whose pattern of attendance is not regular and not likely to be ongoing, services may need to apply for Flexible Support Funding (FSF), which is discussed at section F2. Child care services may seek advice from ISAs regarding FSF support.

C4. How to apply for the Inclusion Support Subsidy

The NISSP needs to ensure that child care services follow the steps outlined below when applying for ISS funding:

- **STEP 1** – Develop a Service Support Plan (SSP) with the assistance of an Inclusion Support Agency (ISA) to assess the child care service's inclusion capacity (refer also to section F1 - SSPs)
- **STEP 2** – Using the SSP, the child care service and ISA assess whether there is a need to apply for ISS funding. If yes, child care services complete the centre based care or home based care Application Form (available from the NISSP website at www.ku.com.au or local ISA)
- **STEP 3** – Child care services must submit the relevant documentary evidence to NISSP for the child's ongoing high support needs (see section C4.3)
- **STEP 4** – Receive endorsement from the ISA for the Application
- **STEP 5** – Submit the Application Form to the NISSP with the Service Support Plan (SSP) attached

At the review date:

- **STEP 6** – Review the SSP and Application to determine whether the need for the approved level of support has changed
- **STEP 7** – Apply for a Continuation of ISS funding by completing an Application Form (available from the NISSP website)
- **STEP 8** – Submit the Application Form to the NISSP

If there is a change in the child care environment which impacts on the level of ISS funding required:

- **STEP 9** – Complete an Application Form or Decrease Form (available from the NISSP website).

C4.1 Service Support Plan

The development of a SSP may be triggered by the enrolment of a child with ongoing high support needs. The focus of the SSP is building the capacity of staff to include the child in the child care environment and must reflect the needs and modifications child care staff will make to support the inclusion of all children. The completed and signed SSP must be included in the ISS Application Form.

Further information about SSPs is located in section F1 – Service Support Plans.

C4.2 ISS Application Form

If a Service Support Plan (SSP) identifies the need for Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS) assistance, the service should complete an ISS Application Form, which is available from the NISSP website at www.ku.com.au or ISA (refer to Appendix B for contact details).

The Application Form must be endorsed by the local ISA for the child care service. The ISA will assist the service to complete the Application Form and endorse the form when completed.

The completed ISS Application Form is then submitted to the NISSP.

C4.3 Documentary Evidence

The NISSP's assessment of an application for ISS funding is based on a child care service supplying documentary evidence of the child's refugee status and/or diagnosed disability or continuous assessment of a disability.

Evidence for a diagnosed disability may include:

- Centrelink documentation stating a parent's or guardian's eligibility for Carers Allowance with respect to the child
- the child's Health Care Card stating the disability code (CD)
- the child's Disability Support Pension (DSP), if the child is over 16 years of age
- a qualified medical practitioner's confirmation of a diagnosis
- the results of an assessment by a registered psychologist
- in rural, remote and very remote areas, evidence of disability may be provided by an allied health professional.

Evidence for a child undergoing continuous assessment for a disability may include:

- an appointment letter for an assessment by a medical practitioner
- supporting documentation or diagnostic report signed by a qualified medical practitioner or registered psychologist
- in rural, remote and very remote areas, supporting documentation or report signed by an allied health professional attesting to the child undergoing further assessment for the purpose of diagnosing a disability.

Evidence for a child from a refugee background demonstrating behaviours symptomatic with having experienced trauma and torture may include:

- documentary evidence of the child's refugee status. As visa codes are subject to change, ISAs and/or child care services must check with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship for the current humanitarian-related visa codes

- the results of an assessment by a qualified medical practitioner or registered psychologist.

Documentary evidence provided with the Application Form must be current (dated within 12 months of the Application being submitted) and signed or otherwise validated by the medical practitioner or psychologist. Documentary evidence will be assessed by the NISSP. In some cases the child care service will be notified that documentary evidence will not be required for future applications for this child while enrolled at the service.

C4.4 Exceptional Circumstances

Where it can be demonstrated that the child care service requires additional hours to include the child in exceptional circumstances, exemption from the ISS Guidelines may be granted by the NISSP in negotiation with the Department. The details of the need must be included in the SSP and included on the ISS Application Form submitted to the NISSP.

Exceptional circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis and are subject to approval by the Department. The Department will advise the NISSP of the outcome of the request for exemption.

C4.5 Shared Care Arrangements in Centre Based Care

Where more than one child with ongoing high support needs is in attendance in the same care environment, the child care service must explore the use of a Shared Care arrangement. A Shared Care arrangement occurs where one additional child care worker is employed to support the inclusion of more than one child in a care environment. When completing the ISS Application Form, the child care service (in consultation with the ISA) will determine if a Shared Care arrangement could meet the service's needs.

C4.6 ISS Assessment and Approval

The NISSP will assess the Application Form against the eligibility requirements as set out in these Guidelines and will notify the service of the outcome of the ISS Application.

If the ISS Application is approved, the NISSP will inform the service of the:

- approved level of funding
- the approved number of hours an additional child care worker can provide per week
- start and end date of the ISS funding period
- date that the ISS review process is to commence.

C4.6.1 Approval period

The NISSP can approve ISS for up to six months from the start date for eligible children undergoing continuous assessment and for up to 12 months for a child with a diagnosed disability or a refugee child.

C4.6.2 ISS agreement by child care services

The approval of an ISS Application is contingent on a child care service agreeing to the terms and conditions of the ISS Funding Application as detailed on the ISS Application Forms and NISSP website. This includes implementing an inclusive program and the actions in the Service Support Plan (SSP).

In addition, the child care service is responsible for:

- evaluation and revision of the SSP
- lodging the Claim for Payment and Attendance Record at the end of the ISS claim period
- employing an additional child care worker consistent with applicable industrial laws (see section C4.9)
- financial management and accountability of ISS funds and program delivery
- providing all reporting requirements to the NISSP
- utilising any ISS funds in accordance with these Guidelines and only for the approved purposes
- applying for a continuation of funding if required
- notifying the NISSP and the ISA of any changes to circumstances, including a reduction in hours of support required or when the child leaves the service, or when the service is sold/transferred to a new operator.

C4.6.3 Service Support Plan

In the case of ISS, a Service Support Plan (SSP) must be completed before the child care service is able to apply for the subsidy. The SSP must accompany the application for ISS.

See section F1 for details regarding SSPs.

C4.7 Review and Continuation of Funding

After the initial 6-month or 12-month approval period, child care services can apply for a continuation of ISS funds by submitting a Continuation of Funding Application to the NISSP. The review for ISS funding will be undertaken by a child care service in consultation with an ISA, and will involve:

- an evaluation of the previous SSP and care environment
- evaluation of whether ongoing ISS support is required

- evaluation of whether there is a change in the level of support needed.

Other events which can trigger a review of the SSP include:

- a child's needs change, impacting on the number of hours approved, Shared Care arrangements, or the physical environment
- a child with ongoing high support needs enters or leaves the service and/or care environment
- a significant change occurs in the care environment, such as staffing changes
- the service changes ownership.

Where a review indicates that the required level of ISS funding has increased, the service can apply to the NISSP to vary their application. Variations to the original ISS approval may carry the same end date as the original approved application. A decrease in the level of support needed will require the service to notify the NISSP of this change.

A child care service must notify the NISSP if the required level of ISS support changes or is no longer required by completing and submitting the appropriate ISS forms. The NISSP is responsible for auditing claims made by child care services. See section C5.5.

C4.8 Variations or changes to the child care environment

C4.8.1 A child with ongoing high support needs enters or leaves the care environment and/or child care service

The level of ISS funding required is determined by the child care service's capacity to include children with ongoing high support needs. When a child with ongoing high support needs moves to another care environment and/or child care service, discussion with the ISA will determine whether to review an existing SSP or to develop a new SSP. Through the SSP process it will be identified if the child care service requires additional support to include the child and if so, what level of support is required.

C4.8.2 A service changes owner and/or operator

Where a child care service in receipt of ISS funding changes owner and/or operator, the new service operator is required to submit a **new** ISS Application Form. The service should contact the Inclusion Support Agency to assist in doing a review of the SSP to determine if ISS support is still required and what level of support is needed.

The new operator must notify the NISSP of a change to service ownership within 30 days, by completing a Change of Ownership Form. The new operator must then lodge an ISS Application Form as soon as they receive confirmation of their Child Care Benefit (CCB) approval. A copy of the CCB Approval Certificate or letter of CCB approval should be attached to the ISS Application Form.

If the Application is approved, the NISSP will, where appropriate, approve the Application from the date of the change in ownership, provided the Application is submitted within three months of the change of ownership date.

Claims for payment prior to notification of the outcome of the funding Application will not be accepted.

C4.9 Conditions relating to staff employed with the ISS

Where the child care service receives Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS) to employ an additional child care worker, the service is responsible for:

- complying with the requirements of the relevant state/territory legislation, regulatory requirements and Awards for child care staff or applicable Federal Industrial Relations Laws and its requirements and considering these requirements when employing additional staff
- ensuring that the number of ISS funded additional workers in a service at any one time is limited to no more than 10 percent of the service's currently utilised child care places.

Where a child is absent from the child care service the ISS funded staff member employed under ISS should receive appropriate notice in line with award provisions. If employed as a casual staff member, stand down provisions should apply.

Child Care workers funded by the ISS funding **cannot** be used to meet state or territory licensing or regulatory requirements. Any workers funded by the ISS must be in addition to the number of staff already required by licensing or regulatory requirements.

Trainees can not be employed as the additional worker at the same time that they are completing their required trainee hours.

C4.10 ISS Rates

Below are ISS funding rates and limits for centre based care services and home based care services. ISS funding limits differ depending on the child care service type.

C 4.10.1 Centre based care services:

Care Type	Subsidy Limit as at 1 July 2009 (indexed annually)
Long Day Care (LDC), including Vacation Care programs provided through a LDC Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$15.95 per hour for an additional carer up to a maximum of 25 hours per week, 52 weeks per year based on 5 days attendance (up to 12 weeks per year for VC in LDC)
Flexible / Innovative Services, MACS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$15.95 per hour for an additional carer up to a maximum of 25 hours per week, 52 weeks per year based on 5 days attendance
Outside of School Hours Care (OSHC), including non-mainstream OSHC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$15.95 per hour for an additional carer up to a maximum of 25 hours per week, 42 weeks per year based on 5 days attendance \$15.95 for an additional carer up to a maximum of 8 hours per day, 6 days per year (for the purpose of pupil free days only).
Vacation Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$15.95 per hour for an additional carer up to a maximum of 40 hours per week, 12 weeks per year based on 5 days attendance \$15.95 for an additional carer up to a maximum of 8 hours per day, 6 days per year (for the purpose of pupil free days only)
Occasional Care (OCC), including non-formula funded OCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$15.95 per hour for an additional carer up to a maximum of 25 hours per week, 52 weeks per year based on 5 days attendance
Mobile Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$15.95 per hour for an additional carer up to a maximum of 25 hours per week, 52 weeks per year based on 5 days attendance

C 4.10.2 ISS Rates for home based care services

Care Type	Subsidy Limit as at 1 July 2009 (indexed annually)
Family Day Care (FDC)	Capacity Payment of either \$4.24 or \$8.48 per hour per care environment up to a maximum of 50 hours per week, 52 weeks per year.
In Home Care (IHC)	Additional Payment of either \$4.24 or \$8.48 per hour per care environment up to a maximum of 50 hours per week, 52 weeks per year.

C4.10.3 Two Tier Capacity Payment for Family Day Care

Family Day Care (FDC) carers caring for an eligible child or children may be approved for \$4.24 per hour (Tier One) per care environment where the impact of caring for the child or children has a mild impact on the carer. Carers may be eligible for this payment even where they are caring for the full complement of children under state and territory regulations.

FDC carers may also be eligible for a payment of \$8.48 per hour (Tier Two) per care environment where it is determined that the child or children being cared for has a significant impact on the carer's capacity to include that child or children in the care environment, resulting in the carer needing to carry less than the full complement of children.

Refer to Attachment 1 for assistance with determining the impact on the carer's capacity to include the child in the care environment.

C4.10.4 Two Tier Additional Payment for In Home Care

In Home Care (IHC) carers caring for an eligible child or children may be approved for \$4.24 per hour (Tier One) per care environment where the impact of caring for the child or children has a mild impact on the carer.

IHC carers may also be eligible for a payment of \$8.48 per hour (Tier Two) per care environment where it is determined that the child or children being cared for has a significant impact on the carer's capacity to include that child or children in the care environment.

Refer to Attachment 1 for assistance with determining the impact on the carer's capacity to include the child in the care environment.

C5. The Claims Process

C5.1 How to claim ISS

Child Care Services must follow the steps below when claiming Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS):

- **STEP 1** – Employ additional child care worker (following notification by NISSP that ISS Application has been approved)
- **STEP 2** – Submit ISS Claim Form to NISSP with a copy of attendance record
- **STEP 3** – NISSP pays claim

ISS funding is paid by the NISSP to child care services. In the case of centre based services, ISS is paid directly to the service. In relation to FDC carers, the payment is made to the FDC scheme or sponsors of the in-home care service.

The child care service can only claim ISS funding for the **actual hours** the additional child care worker was employed for while the child was receiving care at the service, up to the approved number of ISS weekly hours.

To make a claim for payment the child care service must have:

- signed the Application Form to accept the subsidy if offered and the ISS Funding Agreement
- received a written ISS Approval Letter for the period being claimed.

C5.2 Attendance record

Child care services must submit the Claim for Payment Form and Attendance Record to the National ISS Provider for payment of ISS funding.

The payment of ISS funding will:

- be based on an assessment of the hours claimed and attendance record
- only be up to the level of hours per week set out in the written ISS Approval Letter
- be made in respect of support provided after the approval date
- not be made in respect of public holidays where services are closed and the child is not attending care.

C5.3 Absences from care

Where an ISS eligible child is absent from care, Family Day Care (FDC) carers may still claim the ISS to cover these absences for up to 30 days per year.

The Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS) will provide funding to cover absences from care for up to 50 hours for Long Day Care, OSHC, Mobile/Flexible/Innovative services and 80 hours for Vacation Care per year.

C5.4 Claim period

A child care service must submit claims in arrears for Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS) funding. The claim periods will be detailed on the claim forms issued by the NISSP to all services approved for ISS support.

C5.4.1 Timeframe for making a claim

If a claim for payment is **not received within 60 days** after the claim period, the claim cannot be submitted and **no payment will be made**.

This unclaimed funding will then be available for allocations in relation to other ISS applications received by the NISSP.

The NISSP may have capacity to approve payment of claims on a more frequent basis where there is evidence of financial hardship of a service due to waiting for payment. The NISSP will consider “financial hardship” on a case-by-case basis.

C5.5 Periodic auditing of child care services making ISS claims for payment

The NISSP will conduct periodic audits of child care service’s records to verify their Claims for Payment. These audits will require services to submit relevant documentation including ISS eligible children’s attendance records and staff attendance records relating to ISS claim periods.

The NISSP will provide details of audit requirements to child care services in writing, giving a minimum of 2 weeks notice. Services will be required to provide the relevant information required within the time period stated. Services who do not comply will be unable to make claims for ISS until the information is supplied to the NISSP and the audit process is completed.

Child Care Services found to make fraudulent claims for payment for ISS will be reported to DEEWR who will decide on what further action is required.

Impact on the Home Based Care Environment

The table below is provided as a guide for assessing the impact on the home based care environment.

DEVELOPMENTAL ELEMENT (related to a diagnosed disability)	IMPACT ON THE CARER		
	No Subsidy – Low Impact on the Carer	Tier 1 – Low to Medium Impact on the Carer	Tier 2 – High to Very High Impact on the Carer
Communication	The carer is required to provide occasional or periodic assistance to develop the child's communication skills, to aid the child's participation in group experiences or to develop the child's independence.	The carer is required to provide moderate assistance to develop the child's communication skills, to enable the child to participate in group experiences or develop the child's independence.	The carer is required to provide the child with significant support or significant individual support to enable the child to interact with others. The carer may need to develop approaches where the child interacts with others inappropriately.
Social	The carer is required to provide occasional or periodic assistance with the development of the child's social skills.	The carer is required to provide moderate assistance with the development of the child's social skills. This could include selecting a variety of experiences for the child to engage in.	The carer is required to provide the child with significant support or significant individual support to facilitate the child's social interaction with peers and adults. The carer is required to assist or prompt the child's interactions with others. The carer may need to develop approaches where the child presents behaviours that could potentially result in harm to self or others, and where the child interacts with others inappropriately.

DEVELOPMENTAL ELEMENT	IMPACT ON THE CARER		
	Low Impact	Tier 1 – Low to Medium Impact	Tier 2 – High to Very High Impact
Health and Personal Care	The carer is required to provide occasional or periodic assistance to follow up the child's self-help routines.	The carer is required to provide moderate assistance to follow up the child's self-help routines.	The carer is required to provide the child with significant support or significant individual support for complex health and personal care needs. This may include providing a high degree or total degree of assistance to enable the child to eat, drink, go to the toilet and dress.
Physical	The carer is required to provide occasional or periodic assistance with the child's fine/gross motor skills. The carer is required to provide occasional or periodic support and observation with mobility.	The carer is required to provide moderate assistance with the child's fine/gross motor skills. The carer is required to provide occasional, periodic or moderate support and observation with mobility.	The carer is required to provide the child with significant support or full assistance with activities that require fine motor skills or mobility. This may include assisting the child to move, crawl, walk, feed and go to the toilet.
Behavioural	The carer is required to provide occasional or periodic assistance for the management and supervision of the child's challenging behaviours.	The carer is required to provide moderate assistance for the management and supervision of the child's challenging behaviours.	The carer is required to provide the child with significant support for the management of challenging or extreme behaviours.

Professional Support Program

The Professional Support Program (PSP) provides funding for the Professional Support Coordinators (PSCs) (refer to section D) and the Indigenous Professional Support Units (IPSUs) (refer to section E) in each state/territory to support the implementation of the National Quality Framework. It also supports the provision of professional development of mainstream and Indigenous child care services.

Professional Development and Support

Professional Development is an ongoing process that provides the systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of skills and knowledge. It also helps develop the interpersonal qualities necessary for child care workers to carry out their responsibilities and enhance their performance. Professional development provided by the PSCs can also be accessed by ISA and IPSU staff. Professional development provided under the PSP must:

- be grounded in a sound theoretical and philosophical base
- respond to participants' individual backgrounds, experiences and context of their role
- demonstrate clear linkages between theory and practice
- be provided by professional development providers who possess appropriate knowledge and experience
- adopt an interactive approach where appropriate.

The content of professional development programs must support the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes required by those working in child care services. These include knowledge and skill development to support the inclusion of children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, Indigenous children and children with disabilities. The content of professional development must also be accessible to remote and isolated groups.

Professional development will be provided in a variety of formats that will support child care workers to provide quality child care by meeting their ongoing and emerging professional development needs. These may include:

- accredited and non-accredited courses
- conversations and informal sessions
- events, forums, hubs and networks
- collaborative projects
- mentoring and coaching
- advice and information
- information/access to resources.

Professional development and support may be delivered using traditional published materials. Where feasible, new technologies such as teleconferencing, electronic mail, satellite television and other developments in information technology may be used.

Why is professional development important?

To be adequately prepared to work with children and families, child care workers should undertake a comprehensive program that includes:

- the opportunity to develop an understanding of the literature
- opportunities for coaching and on-the-job learning
- reflection on their practice to determine how it can be developed in an ongoing manner.

The literature acknowledges that child care workers with higher qualifications demonstrate the capacity for higher quality care. Furthermore, professional development and learning is important for child care workers if they are to keep abreast of changes and provide quality child care.

Child care in Australia has experienced significant changes over the last decade, along with increased accountability through both national quality assurance systems and state/territory-based regulatory requirements. The introduction of the national Child Care Management System has placed an increased emphasis on financial management accountability and good governance.

The implementation of the National Quality Framework will require ongoing professional discussions about the importance and purpose of the framework as well as professional support and development for child care workers to provide them with the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding of the current child development theories and practice frameworks.

Organisations that are successful at integrating change generally demonstrate the following three characteristics:

- the capacity for innovation, including the ability to conceptualise new ideas and models
- professionalism that include personal and organisational competence, supported by workforce training and development
- the openness to collaborate with other organisations that can enhance its offerings or develop its practices.

These characteristics largely reside in leadership positions. However, in the context of child care services, people in these positions have varying levels of experience and support is required to build skills in business, human resource management, financial management, planning, organisational change and leadership. Ongoing professional development is a key factor in facilitating the organisational change in the child care sector that is necessary for implementing the National Quality Framework and other developments in child care practice.

Approaches for professional development

The PSP supports approaches to professional development that are underpinned by research and good practice. The literature has identified the following as more successful in providing learning outcomes for child care workers:

- mentoring that is incorporated into formal programs or applied in an informal manner
- networking and collaboration that support reflection, sharing of experience and focus on solutions

- learning approaches, using action research, which encourage the development of new knowledge and reflective practice. These approaches position child care workers as active learners who are responsible for their own professional development
- professional development that supports child care workers in their role as leaders is essential, particularly for those who are new to their position.

Section D

Professional Support Coordinators

D1.	<u>Description</u>	42
D2.	<u>Objectives</u>	42
D3.	<u>How to access the PSCs</u>	43
D4.	<u>Roles and Responsibilities</u>	43
D5.	<u>Communication Activities</u>	44
D6.	<u>Priority areas for Professional Development and Support</u>	44
D7.	<u>Professional Support Service Providers</u>	45
D8.	<u>Professional Support Fee Structure</u>	46
D9.	<u>Planning and Coordination</u>	46
D10.	<u>Networking and Collaboration</u>	47
D11.	<u>Budget and Performance Monitoring</u>	48
D12.	<u>Progress Reporting</u>	49

D1. Description

Professional Support Coordinators (PSCs) provide professional development and support to child care workers by subcontracting Professional Support Service Providers (PSSPs). PSCs also provide the Bicultural Support program, resource libraries and specialist equipment.

PSCs will respond to current and emerging professional development and support needs in the child care sector. The PSCs will work closely with PSSPs, ISAs and IPSUs to meet the professional development and support needs of all eligible child care services and in particular, work with IPSUs to support eligible Indigenous child care services. PSCs will share knowledge and resources with their counterparts in other jurisdictions.

D2. Objectives

The objective of the PSC is to provide professional development that is based on evidence and good practice in order to:

- lead professional practice and drive quality improvement
- support services to implement the new Early Years Learning Framework
- prepare and support child care workers for their changing roles under the National Quality Framework and enhance child care workers' knowledge and skills on existing and new areas of practice
- support the inclusion of children from diverse backgrounds, including Indigenous children, children with a disability and children from CALD backgrounds.

D3. How to access the PSCs

PSCs must provide information to child care services on how to access professional development and support, library resources, bicultural support and specialist equipment. This information must be provided regularly and in a variety of formats and include information on how professional development and support can be accessed through referral by ISAs and IPSUs.

The contact details of all PSCs are at Appendix A.

D4. Roles and Responsibilities

PSCs will facilitate the following forms of professional development and support:

- customised professional development and support as requested by eligible child care services, either on an individual centre basis or as a collective within a region or neighbourhood that has an emphasis on capacity building at the centre level
- customised support for child care services in special circumstances
- calendar or in-service training
- learning approaches (using action research) that encourage the development of new knowledge and reflective practice
- an action research project to support the professional learning of ISAs and IPSUs
- support pathways for new and existing child care workers to attain accredited qualifications
- professional supervision
- mentoring that is incorporated into formal programs or applied on an informal basis
- networking and collaboration that support reflection, the sharing of experience and focus on solutions.

D4.1 Bicultural Support Program

The PSCs are responsible for coordinating the Bicultural Support Program (BSP). Guidance can be found in section F3.

The BSP funding allocation will be determined at the commencement of the Funding Agreement period and can be used for the following purposes:

- for employment of bicultural support consultants;
- for employment of casual bilingual/bicultural workers; and
- for resource material, leaflets or flyers to support the BSP (up to 5 per cent of the BSP allocation).

D4.2 General Resource Library

The PSC will directly manage or subcontract a PSSP to co-ordinate the General Resource Library. Guidance can be found in section F5.

D4.3 Specialist Equipment

The PSCs are responsible for maintaining Specialist Equipment. Guidance can be found in section F4.

D5. Communication Activities

PSCs must undertake the following communication activities:

- maintain a 1800 phone line to provide child care services with an access point to PSC professional development and support
- maintain a website or web page with links to the websites and contact details of other IPSP service providers
- actively promote professional development, publications, the website and other media
- actively promote the PSC and network with relevant services and other IPSP providers
- establish strategies for updating eligible Indigenous child care services with the latest child care research and news from the sector.

D6. Priority areas for Professional Development and Support

PSCs will provide professional development and support to child care services in the following areas:

Leadership and management

- support the development of organisational systems that enable service governance, commitment to continuous improvement, planning and evaluation, and business management (finance, human resources and organisational arrangements)
- support child care service directors in their role as leaders, particularly those who are new to their position.

Relationships and partnerships

- develop positive and meaningful interactions between staff and children and the engagement of children in the program
- implement approaches for promoting the engagement of families in the development and delivery of programs, and the development and maintenance of links to the community more generally
- implement strategies for working with families, especially Indigenous families, families from CALD backgrounds and families with children with disabilities
- implement strategies that encourage social justice and participation in child care services
- respond to the expectations and demands of parents as consumers.

Curriculum development

- support the implementation and ongoing planning and evaluation of learning programs and the proposed EYLF
- develop programs and curricula, including how to interpret and work effectively with current and emerging theories on how young children learn and develop
- provide a quality environment that supports learning and development, guiding children's behaviour, including supervision of children; managing challenging behaviours; and working with diverse family expectations
- organise the physical environment to engage children in learning experiences
- be informed of new developments, innovation and change in the child care sector

- implement environments and opportunities for children to enable them to participate in learning and development that is culturally and linguistically inclusive
- develop environments where play can be creative and recreational when appropriate.

National Quality Framework and other mandatory requirements

- implement mandatory requirements, including those to be developed under the National Quality Framework and the national Child Care Management System
- support Indigenous child care services funded under the Budget Based Funding program to understand their requirements under their Funding Agreements.

D6.1 PSC Support for Building the Capacity of ISAs and IPSUs

The PSCs will coordinate projects to meet the professional development needs of ISAs and IPSUs in each state and territory in order to provide opportunities for deeper learning and reflection and explore good practice approaches in delivering inclusion support.

The aim of these projects is to strengthen the role of ISAs and IPSUs as facilitators of strengths-based practice and reflective learning in child care services, and as proponents of the EYLF and the NQF.

These projects will use an action research approach and will be developed in consultation with ISAs and IPSUs. They will support the development of the following competencies:

- reflective practice and capacity building within a strengths-based framework
- communication skills
- family-centred approaches
- cross- cultural competence and child development
- interdisciplinary team work and interagency collaboration
- inclusive practices and the use of natural learning environments
- innovation and change in child care theory and practice.

D7. Professional Support Service Providers

PSCs will subcontract Professional Support Service Providers (PSSPs) to deliver professional development and support, including Indigenous cultural awareness.

IPSUs can be subcontracted where appropriate to provide:

- advice on culturally appropriate service delivery to meet the needs of Indigenous children attending mainstream child care services
- advice on the needs of Indigenous children and Indigenous child care workers, and strategies for meeting their needs
- advice for the PSC on strategies to ensure the general resource library contains resources to support the social inclusion of Indigenous children and families and recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and identities
- consultancy services for the PSC and ISA when required.

In general, the following would not ordinarily be eligible for funding under a subcontracting agreement:

- bodies that are not incorporated and without a sponsoring organisation
- Australian Government Departments.

As per the terms and conditions of the Funding Agreement, PSCs are required to seek approval for subcontractors. Details of subcontractors will be provided in the six monthly progress report. Approval for subcontractors will be provided by the Department as part of feedback on the six monthly progress report.

D8. Professional Support Fee Structure

The PSCs will work to develop a consistent fee structure for the delivery of professional development and support based on national fee setting principles as outlined in the Funding Agreement. The fee structure must be agreed by the Department and must cover:

- professional support
- membership of the resource library.

The National Fee Setting Principles are that:

- fees reflect the capacity of the market to pay
- fees charged to eligible services are not based on full cost recovery
- fees charged to non-eligible services are to be based on cost recovery
- fees maximise client participation (low enough to encourage attendance and high enough to be a disincentive to non attendance post booking).

D9. Planning and Coordination

D9.1 Needs analysis

While recognising the need to maintain flexibility to respond to the needs of child care services in special circumstances, PSCs will take a planned approach to the delivery of professional development and support.

PSCs will undertake annual needs analysis processes that will draw on a variety of data sources such as surveys, focus groups and interviews. Research undertaken by the PSCs will identify the current and future professional support strengths and needs of the sector, including opportunities for innovation.

D9.2 PSC State Plan

The PSCs will develop an annual PSC State Plan (implementation plan) which describes the professional development activities that they deliver. The implementation plan will be prepared using the template agreed by the Department and will form the basis of the performance reports. A template will be developed in consultation with the PSC Alliance.

D10. Networking and Collaboration

PSCs are responsible for establishing effective partnerships with all stakeholders, including the IPSUs and ISAs. PSCs are required to encourage better service integration and collaboration between IPSP service providers.

PSCs will work in collaboration with IPSUs and ISAs to assist child care services in becoming culturally inclusive of Indigenous and CALD children and families.

D10.1 Participation in IPSP Forums

PSCs will participate in the:

- national IPSP forum
- state and territory IPSP forums
- PSC Alliance.

D10.1.1 State/Territory Forums

Each state and territory IPSU will be required to participate in the relevant IPSP state/territory forums. Any costs for this participation (within reason) are to be covered within the IPSU budget. The state/territory forums may provide an opportunity for networking with PSCs and ISAs.

D10.1.2 PSC Alliance

The PSC Alliance is a national forum of the PSCs which aims to:

- address professional development and support issues at the national level
- facilitate linkages between different parts of program
- offer opportunities to share information and respond to issues experienced by eligible child care services
- identify opportunities for innovation
- identify strategies for collaboration and information sharing between service providers
- review program progress.

The PSC Alliance will invite representatives from the IPSU Alliance and ISA Alliance (when established) to attend.

The Alliance will also oversee projects of national significance which can include:

- a national mentoring initiative to support those currently working in senior management and leadership positions in children's services
- the design and development of a broad range of professional tools and strategies to assist child care centres in assessing, identifying, implementing and evaluating the professional development and support staff in strategic and meaningful ways that are relevant to local contexts
- research to investigate leadership and business management concerns that impact on capacity building within child care centres around Australia
- research on innovations in professional development and support on related matters such as enhancement of pedagogical practice, business management and leadership within children's services.

D11. Budget and Performance Monitoring

D11.1 Funding and Budget Management

PSCs are required to manage and monitor their budget and provide expenditure reports on the budget on a six-monthly basis.

D11.1.1 Uses of Funding

The majority of funding (70 per cent) provided to the PSC will be for direct service delivery. The PSC will be able to retain up to 30 per cent of the total funding for administration and coordination costs.

Administrative and coordination costs include costs associated with (but not limited to):

- recruiting, training and salaries for administrative staff, including toll-free help line operators;
- maintaining an office, including
 - ⇒ insurance, rent, signage, general office equipment, including operating the toll-free phone line)
 - ⇒ monitoring and acquitting the total amount of funding allocated to the region, as well as incoming funds from service users
 - ⇒ reporting to the Department and participating in evaluation processes
 - ⇒ developing and maintaining the website
 - ⇒ maintaining policies such as fee structures, equipment loan and conflict resolution
 - ⇒ undertaking needs analyses and revisions of service delivery plans
- engaging and managing all aspects of subcontracting to PSSPs, including bicultural support, general resources or specialist equipment provision, if appropriate, disbursement of funds to PSSPs, and management of subcontracting funding agreements
- developing and distributing promotional and marketing material to eligible child care services; undertaking liaison and stakeholder management activities; participating in the National Professional Support Alliance as well as state/territory and national IPSP forums.

Should the PSC choose to directly deliver specific outputs, such as training and operating bicultural support provision, or general resource or specialist equipment provision, the costs of these would not be considered within the 30 per cent funding cap for administrative and coordination expenses. However, the limit on funds for direct service delivery by PSCs would apply.

Funding (30 per cent or otherwise) cannot be used for overseas travel, outright purchase of a vehicle, major office renovation, or building construction (capital works).

All income generated from the activities funded under the PSC, including fees-for-service, consultancy services, training, resources and bank interest must be clearly identified in financial reports. This funding will be considered part of the PSC operating budget and must be used for the purpose of delivering professional development and support as per the Funding Agreement with the Department.

D11.1.2 Funding limits on direct service delivery by PSCs

There is a 15 per cent limit on direct service delivery by PSCs. However, there will be provision to negotiate above the 15 per cent limit on direct service delivery in exceptional circumstances, for example, where there are limited providers or limited expertise in the community.

In the case of a consortium, the 15 per cent limit on direct service delivery will apply to the lead agency and any consortium member that is funded for elements of the coordination and administration work. If a consortium member (not the lead agency) does not perform any element of the coordination and administrative work, for example, contributing in an unfunded advisory capacity, then the 15 per cent cap on service delivery funding will not apply.

PSSPs in their own right will not be limited to 15 per cent funding for service delivery. The Department retains the discretion to vary this model as appropriate to ensure equity in the distribution of funds.

D12. Progress Reporting

The PSC is required to submit Six-Monthly Progress and Expenditure reports using the agreed template. In addition, the PSCs are required to provide relevant information to the Department on matters relating to the provision of professional development and support to child care services.

These reports will provide an update on how the PSC is performing against program outcomes, objectives and priorities as outlined in the strategic discussions at the IPSP state/territory forums and the PSC work plan. The reports may also include:

- program outcomes and outputs on a state/territory-wide and ISA region basis
- key performance indicators
- data collection
- milestones
- administration and coordination expenses
- payments to PSSPs for service delivery and income generated
- cost of toll-free number, website, marketing material and mail outs to eligible services, and costs associated with producing training material, booking venues, accommodation and travel, as well as maintaining and developing resources.

D12.1 Monitoring visits

The Department will undertake monitoring visits with PSCs to meet with staff, discuss their progress reports and any issues or questions arising from the reports.

Section E

Indigenous Professional Support Unit

E1.	<u>Description</u>	50
E2.	<u>Objectives</u>	50
E3.	<u>How to access the IPSUs</u>	51
E4.	<u>Roles and Responsibilities</u>	51
E5.	<u>Priority areas for Professional Development and Support</u>	52
E6.	<u>Planning and Coordination</u>	53
E7.	<u>Networking and Collaboration</u>	54
E8.	<u>Participation in IPSP Forums</u>	54
E9.	<u>Professional Development for IPSU Staff</u>	55
E10.	<u>Budget and Performance Monitoring</u>	55
E11.	<u>Progress Reporting</u>	56

E1. Description

Indigenous Professional Support Units (IPSUs) are among the key components of the Australian Government's commitment to ensuring that all Indigenous children attending eligible Indigenous child care services have access to high quality care.

IPSUs provide professional development and support to eligible Indigenous child care services to enable them to provide quality child care.

IPSUs facilitate access for eligible Indigenous child care services and their managing bodies to:

- professional development and support that is provided through the Professional Support Coordinators (PSCs), including Bicultural Support, General Resources Library, Specialist Equipment and tailored intensive support as required
- support available from the Inclusion Support Agencies (ISAs), including inclusion support, Flexible Support Funding (FSF) and assistance with preparation of applications for Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS).

In addition, IPSUs provide advice to the PSCs (as subcontracted Professional Support Service Providers (PSSPs) where appropriate) and ISAs on culturally appropriate professional development and support for mainstream child care services.

E2. Objectives

The objectives of the IPSUs are to:

- provide professional development opportunities and support based on evidence and good practice in order to meet the needs of eligible Indigenous child care services and their staff

- support Indigenous child care services to implement the new Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and encourage quality improvement
- prepare and support child care workers for their changing roles under the National Quality Framework and enhance child care workers' knowledge and skills on existing and new areas of practice
- facilitate access to, and/or provide, professional support and advice for managing bodies of eligible Indigenous child care services to maintain effective organisational systems
- refer Indigenous child care services to the ISAs and/or PSCs for access to additional IPSP support services
- provide advice to PSCs and ISAs that will assist mainstream child care services in becoming culturally appropriate to meet the needs of Indigenous child care workers and Indigenous children attending those services.

E3. How to access the IPSUs

IPSUs are funded to provide information to Indigenous child care services on how to access professional support. This information must be provided regularly and in a variety of formats and include information on how professional development and support can be accessed from the PSCs or ISAs.

The contact details of all IPSUs are at Appendix A.

E4. Roles and Responsibilities

IPSUs will provide professional development and support to eligible Indigenous child care services and their managing bodies, including those services in rural and remote areas.

IPSUs will implement the following approaches providing professional development and support:

- mentoring that is incorporated into formal programs or applied on an informal basis
- networking and collaboration that support reflection, sharing of practices, experience, and focus on solutions.

IPSUs will also provide:

Mentoring and Support

- provide initial support and advice to eligible Indigenous child care services experiencing difficulties or services in crisis and refer to the relevant PSC for intensive support, where appropriate
- undertake the role of a PSSP in providing intensive support to Indigenous child care services, where appropriate
- refer to the PSC and ISAs where necessary to meet the inclusion and professional support needs of eligible Indigenous child care services
- where appropriate, facilitate partnering and mentoring between eligible Indigenous child care services.

Referral

- respond to requests and referrals for inclusion support for children with disability in eligible Indigenous child care services
- where appropriate, refer eligible Indigenous child care services to the relevant ISA to develop a Service Support Plan (SSP).

Linkages

- assist eligible Indigenous child care services in linking with relevant community groups, services and organisations
- assist eligible Indigenous child care services in identifying their professional development needs and opportunities
- provide pathways for eligible Indigenous child care services to access information that promotes high quality programs for children.

Resources

- develop culturally appropriate resources, where needed, to meet the local needs and requirements of Indigenous child care services
- facilitate access to professional development and resources through the PSCs and ISAs for the employees and managing bodies of eligible Indigenous child care services.

The IPSUs will also support Indigenous child care service to access IPSP support services, including the ISS, Specialist Equipment, General Resources Library, Bicultural Support, FSF and tailored intensive support. The development of a SSP is a prerequisite to funding applications for ISS, FSF, Bicultural Support and Specialist Equipment (see section F).

E4.1. Communication Activities

IPSUs will undertake the following communication activities:

- maintain a 1800 phone line to provide a central point of contact for eligible Indigenous child care services seeking professional development and support
- maintain a website or web page with links to the websites and contact details of other IPSP service providers
- actively promote the IPSU and network with relevant services and other IPSP providers
- develop a range of communication activities and resources suited to Indigenous child care services and their managing bodies. These may include online resources and marketing materials
- establish strategies for updating eligible Indigenous child care services with the latest child care research and news from the sector.

E5. Priority areas for Professional Development and Support

IPSUs will provide professional development and support to eligible Indigenous child care services in the following areas:

Leadership and management

- the development of operational management systems for Indigenous child care services in the areas of:
 - ⇒ financial management
 - ⇒ employment and workforce issues such as recruitment and retention strategies
 - ⇒ business planning
 - ⇒ orientation training and support for management committees, directors and child care workers
 - ⇒ the role of child care service directors as leaders.

Relationships and partnerships

- building the capacity of Indigenous child care services to work together with families

Curriculum development

- programming and curriculum development
- provide a quality environment that supports learning and development; guiding children's behaviour, including supervision of children; managing challenging behaviours; and working with diverse family expectations
- health, safety and nutrition

National Quality Framework and other mandatory requirements

- training and support for a range of Australian Government programs such as the National Quality Framework, the Early Years Learning Framework, the National Child Care Management System and reporting requirements under the Budget Based Funding program

E5.1 Support for Mainstream Child Care Services

When requested, IPSUs will work in collaboration with PSCs and ISAs to assist mainstream child care services in becoming culturally inclusive and supportive of Indigenous children and families, and Indigenous child care workers. When requests for significant assistance are received, IPSUs will need to identify, in consultation with PSCs or ISAs, the costs of the support. For minor requests of assistance the IPSU will provide these free of charge. Requests for assistance from the PSCs or ISAs may include:

- advice on culturally appropriate service delivery to meet the needs of Indigenous children attending mainstream child care services
- advice on the needs of Indigenous children and Indigenous child care workers in mainstream child care services, and strategies for meeting their needs
- advice for PSCs on strategies to ensure the general resource library contains resources to support the social inclusion of Indigenous children and families, and recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and identities
- consultancy services (including as a PSSP) for PSCs and ISAs when required.

E6. Planning and Coordination

E6.1 Needs analysis

IPSUs will undertake annual needs analysis processes that will draw on data sources such as surveys. Where appropriate, IPSUs will share the findings of the annual needs analysis by IPSUs with the relevant PSC in their state/territory. This information can be utilised by the PSC to identify current and future professional support needs of the Indigenous child care sector.

IPSUs will contribute to the development of a standardised approach to the national needs analysis.

E6.2 IPSU State/Territory Plan

The IPSUs will develop an annual IPSU state/territory plan outlining the professional development and support activities that will be undertaken. The IPSU state/territory plan will be prepared using the agreed template and will form the basis of the progress reports. A template will be developed in consultation with the IPSU Alliance.

E7. Networking and Collaboration

IPSUs are jointly responsible for establishing effective partnerships with all stakeholders, including the PSCs and ISAs. IPSUs are required to encourage better service integration and collaboration between IPSP service providers.

IPSUs work in collaboration with the PSCs and ISAs to respond to current and emerging professional development and support needs in the child care sector. IPSUs also work closely with their respective state/territory PSCs and ISAs to share knowledge and resources. Where appropriate, IPSUs collaborate with Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP) service providers in other states/territories.

ISAs assist child care services to complete an SSP. IPSUs will refer eligible Indigenous child care services to the relevant Inclusion Support Facilitator (ISF) in order to access these support services. Where appropriate, in order to suit local arrangements, IPSUs and ISFs will collaborate to assist eligible Indigenous child care services in completing the SSP. It is important that both the child care service and the ISF agree and sign off on the actions listed in a SSP.

The collaboration of IPSUs and ISFs may include the development of a work-plan of visits.

In the case of tailored intensive support, IPSUs may refer eligible Indigenous child care services to additional support provided through PSCs. IPSUs and PSCs will collaborate in determining the level of tailored intensive support required and the most appropriate provider of the support.

E8. Participation in IPSP Forums

IPSUs will participate in the:

- national IPSP forum
- state and territory IPSP forums
- IPSU Alliance.

E8.1 State and Territory IPSP Forums

Each state and territory IPSU will be required to participate in the relevant IPSP state/territory forums. Any costs for this participation (within reason) are to be covered within the IPSU budget. The state/territory forums may provide an opportunity for networking with PSCs and ISAs.

E8.2 IPSU Alliance

The aim of the IPSU Alliance is to facilitate a national and strategic approach to the delivery of IPSU professional development and support within the Inclusion and Professional Support Program. The IPSU Alliance will:

- address professional development and support issues at the national level
- facilitate linkages between different parts of the program
- offer opportunities to share information and respond to issues experienced by eligible child care services
- look for opportunities for innovation
- identify strategies for collaboration and information sharing between service providers
- review program progress
- nominate members to participate in the national IPSP forums.

In rotation, each state/territory IPSU will be invited to host a meeting of the IPSU Alliance. The Department will provide separate funding for each meeting to enable the IPSU Alliance to hold two face-to-face meetings per year.

The IPSU Alliance will invite representatives from the PSC Alliance and ISA Alliance (when established) to attend.

E9. Professional Development for IPSU Staff

IPSUs are responsible for ensuring their staff have access to a range of professional development opportunities that support them in gaining the knowledge and skills important for their role. Professional development of IPSU staff should focus on the development in competencies in areas such as:

- reflective practice and capacity building
- communication skills
- family-centred approaches
- cross-cultural competence and cross-cultural child development
- interdisciplinary team work and interagency collaboration
- inclusive practices and the use of natural learning environments
- innovation and change in child care theory and practice
- PSC product knowledge.

The IPSUs will have the opportunity to participate in professional development activities that will be coordinated by the PSCs. Professional development projects will be developed in consultation with IPSUs and ISAs. The aim of the activities is to support the development of the competencies in the areas listed above. Where appropriate, the IPSUs may also be asked to contribute to the costs of the activities.

E10. Budget and Performance Monitoring

IPSUs are required to manage and monitor their budget and provide expenditure reports to the Department on a six monthly basis.

E10.1 Use of Funding

The majority of the funding (70 per cent) provided to each IPSU is for direct service delivery. The IPSU is able to retain up to 30 per cent of the total funding for administration and coordination costs.

Administration and coordination costs are considered to include costs associated with (but not limited to):

- recruitment and professional development for IPSU staff;

- maintaining an office, including insurance, rent, signage, general office equipment, such as operating the toll-free phone line;
- reporting to the Department
- developing and maintaining the website or webpage link
- undertaking needs analyses and revisions of service delivery
- developing and distributing promotional and marketing material to eligible Indigenous child care services
- liaison and stakeholder management
- participating in the state/territory IPSP forums
- participating in the IPSP evaluation process.

Funding cannot be used for overseas travel, outright purchase of a vehicle, major office renovation or building construction (capital works).

On occasion when an IPSU is to host the IPSU Alliance meeting, a separate Funding Agreement or Variation will be arranged between the Department and the relevant IPSU.

All income generated from the activities funded under the IPSU, including fees-for-service, consultancy services, training, resources and bank interest must be clearly identified in financial reports. This funding will be considered part of the IPSU operating budget and must be used for the purpose of delivering professional support as per the Funding Agreement with the Department.

IPSUs will provide details of subcontractors in the Six Monthly Progress and Expenditure report. Approval for subcontractors will be provided by the Department as part of feedback on the six monthly progress report.

E10.2 Professional Support Fee Structure

IPSUs will not charge fees to eligible Indigenous child care services (receiving Budget Based Funding) for the provision of professional development and support.

Indigenous child care services that do not meet eligibility requirements as outlined in section A5 may be supported on a fee-for-service basis. Fees will be determined by the IPSUs and will reflect the capacity of the child care service to pay.

E11. Progress Reporting

IPSUs are required to submit Six-Monthly Progress and Expenditure reports, for the periods January to June and July to December each year, using the agreed template.

These reports will provide an update on how the IPSU is performing against program outcomes, objectives and priorities as stated in the IPSU state/territory plan. Other information which may be required in the reports include:

- program outcomes
- key performance indicators
- data collection
- milestones
- administration and coordination expenses.

IPSUs must also provide an annual Audited Financial Acquittal Report as well as any ad hoc information requested by the Department.

E11.1 Monitoring visits

The Department will undertake monitoring visits with IPSUs to meet with staff, discuss their progress reports and any issues or questions arising from the reports.

SECTION F

Inclusion and Professional Support Resources

F1.	<u>Service Support Plans</u>	58
F2.	<u>Flexible Support Funding</u>	65
F3.	<u>Bicultural Support</u>	71
F4.	<u>Specialist Equipment</u>	73
F5.	<u>General Resources Library</u>	75

F1. Service Support Plans

F1.1 Description

The Service Support Plan (SSP) is an assessment and planning tool used in the ISA consultation process to systematically explore child care service needs and identify strategies that support the development of the child care service in order to successfully include children with additional needs from the Inclusion and Professional Support (IPSP) priority groups. The SSP template is included in these Guidelines below. Additional information regarding the SSP can be found on the NISSP website, www.ku.com.au, including a “Guide for Developing a Service Support Plan”. ISAs can also be contacted by child care services seeking advice and support on SSPs. ISA contact details are provided in Appendix B.

F1.1.1 What is the SSP for?

The development of an SSP is a prerequisite to applications for funding through the Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS), Flexible Support Funding (FSF), bicultural support and specialist equipment.

In the case of FSF, bicultural support and specialist equipment, the completion of a SSP should not unnecessarily delay the provision of needed assistance. A child care service which is unable to complete an SSP in time to accompany an application for support may contact the ISA and commence the development of a SSP over the phone. The SSP can be completed once support is in place at the child care service.

In the case of ISS, a SSP must be completed before the child care service is able to apply for the subsidy. The SSP must accompany the application for ISS.

F1.1.2 What do the SSPs incorporate?

There are three key sections to the SSP as detailed below:

- A. Service Information – includes Child Care Service and ISA Details
- B. Service Review – includes issues and dynamics that impact on the child care service

- C. Staff Capacity Building Plan – includes Staff Need, Team Goals, Resources available to support goal implementation, Action Plan, Progress and Future Directions.

In the development of the SSP for an environment, the child care service examines the care environment and the staff capacity to include a child or children with additional or high support needs. The SSP identifies:

- the impact on the environment and what staff will need to change to enable them to support a child or children's access to the service and engagement in all aspects of the program
- modifications staff may have to make to policy, pedagogy, planning, activities and the physical environment including social play
- how the staff will engage with the family and any relevant organisations
- new knowledge, training or supports staff require in the area of inclusion,
- goals that will guide all staff in the environment
- internal and external capacity building opportunities including other IPSP supports such as Bicultural Support, family and professional learning experiences
- actions the service will implement to meet the goals including policies and practices the child care service might adopt to support future inclusion.

To support the active use of the SSP in the environment the information should be organised so that the staff can track issues across each column from the Service Need to the related Action.

Through the SSP the child care service will identify goals to achieve inclusion, which can include professional development or access to resources such as specialist equipment and general resources. The child care service may determine that with the support of the ISA, the strategies identified in the SSP can be implemented within the service's current capacity to successfully include a child with additional needs.

Where there is a need for additional resources, these can be provided from within the IPSP through the FSF, ISS or bicultural or from external providers such as health or education providers.

Service Support Plan Progress and Future Directions

The child care service together with the ISA should plan and engage in an evaluation of the SSP. Comments should be inserted in the SSP template in Section C under the heading "Progress and Future Directions". Evaluation is a tool to guide and support the capacity building of staff and is part of a reflective professional learning cycle. The Progress and Future Directions is part of the ISS Review process.

The evaluation process identifies:

- actions that have been successfully implemented
- actions that were unsuccessful and why
- new issues or needs and/or
- the reason for continuing goals

The outcomes of this process will inform the development of the new SSP. An evaluation may occur at a time that the staff and/or ISF deem it would support and progress inclusion in the environment or when needs change.

An evaluation may also occur when a child is leaving an environment so staff in the new environment have current information to inform the development of the SSP for their environment.

A copy of the SSP template is provided below.

Service Support Plan Template

The aim of a Service Support Plan (SSP) is to enable the identification and implementation of a plan of action to build the capacity of a service to successfully include children with additional needs from the IPSP priority groups. Section F.1 of the IPSP Guidelines provides an overview of SSPs. A guide to preparing an SSP is available on the DEEWR website. It is aimed at assisting ISFs and child care services when preparing an SSP.

A. Service Information

Child Care Service details		Inclusion Support Agency (ISA) details	
Child Care Service Name:		ISA Region Name:	
Care type:	No. of approved places:	Name of ISA:	
Name of Coordinator/Director:		Name of Inclusion Support Facilitator:	
Telephone: ()	Fax: ()	Telephone: ()	Fax: ()
Email:		Email:	
Location Address:		Location Address:	
Postal Address:		Postal Address:	

B . Service Review

What are the issues and dynamics that impact on the child care service's capacity to include children with additional needs?

Consider the physical environment, the daily program, the number of children from IPSP priority groups, the needs and/or impact of children, family and community factors, relevant service policies and practices, management and/or staff experience and dynamics. .

C. Staff Capacity Building Plan

Staff Needs	Team Goals	Resources available to support goal implementation

Action Plan	Progress and Future Directions
<p><u>Goal or Focus heading:</u> <i>(list implementation strategies)</i></p> <p><u>Goal or Focus heading:</u></p>	

Signatures:

Coordinator/Director

Child Care Staff/Carer

ISF

Date

Review Date

F2. Flexible Support Funding

F2.1 Description

Flexible Support Funding (FSF) is a funding subsidy administered by ISAs and paid to child care services to enable them to be more responsive to families and children with additional needs, such as those with a disability, from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background, a refugee child or an Indigenous child. In order to be eligible for FSF, the child care service must have already enrolled a child with additional needs.

If the SSP has identified the need for FSF, an FSF Application Form must be completed and submitted to the ISA.

The amount of FSF funding available in each ISA region is limited to an annual capped allocation. Eligibility for FSF does not mean an automatic entitlement to funding.

F2.2 Approved purposes for Flexible Support Funding

ISAs will approve FSF to assist the child care service to employ an additional child care worker to increase the staff-to-child ratio above licensing requirements. However, it can also be used as a financial contribution to family day carers and in-home carers to attend specialist training after hours.

Approved purposes for FSF include:

- assisting child care services to include a child with ongoing high support needs in circumstances where it is unclear whether ISS is required on an ongoing basis
- enabling release time for permanent child care workers to settle a child with ongoing high support needs into the child care environment, for example, a child who is transferring to a new care environment or type (such as from long day care (LDC) to outside school hours care (OSHC))
- enabling release time for permanent child care workers or carers to attend specialist training that is relevant to the inclusion of a child with additional needs
- enabling release time for permanent child care workers or carers to prepare a SSP to support the inclusion of a child with additional needs
- providing a financial contribution to family day carers and in-home carers unable to attend specialist training during business hours. Specialist training must relate specifically to the additional needs of the child in care
- providing family day carers and in home carers with an additional worker to assist them in including a child with additional needs on out-of-home excursions (for example, playgroups or vacation care excursions)

- providing home based child care workers or carers with an additional worker so that a child with additional needs who attends on an irregular basis can participate in out-of-home excursions or other special activities, (for example, playgroups or vacation care excursions)
- assisting services to include a child with additional needs in circumstances where attendance may be irregular and an application for ISS may not be appropriate, for example, in occasional care, MACS, flexible/innovative services or mobile services
- assisting services in circumstances where ISS has already been approved but an emergency situation has resulted in the child requiring additional hours of care for a time-limited period.

Details on the FSF subsidy rates and funding limits are provided at section F2.6.

F2.3 Types of Support that are not approved uses for Flexible Support Funding

ISAs will ensure FSF is not used to provide assistance for the following purposes:

- augmenting staffing levels to meet local licensing requirements
- as an interim or alternative source of funding while an application for ISS is being processed
- purchasing specialist equipment or resources
- transport costs
- medical and therapeutic interventions
- settlement services for immigrants
- support more appropriately funded through ISS or Bicultural Support
- support more appropriately funded by state/territory governments or other agencies.

F2.4 FSF Application and approval processes

Child care services wishing to apply for FSF should contact their local ISA. An ISA will help identify the support needs of the child care service and assist with the development of a SSP.

If the SSP identifies the need for FSF, the ISA will assist the service to complete an FSF application form. If a SSP has been completed, it must accompany the FSF application form. If the need for FSF is urgent, a child care service can commence a SSP over the phone and complete it once support is in place.

Once an ISA has received an FSF Application, the ISA must:

- notify the child care service within four business days of the outcome of their FSF Application and if approved, provide the service with an FSF approval letter

- provide a follow-up call or visit to the child care service within 10 business days of FSF approval to assess the appropriateness of the support provided
- process claims for FSF within 30 days of receipt of a correctly rendered invoice.

ISAs are responsible for assessing applications in line with the FSF guidelines. Once the child care service has been notified that the FSF application has been approved, the child care service can proceed with the employment of an additional child care worker.

By signing and submitting an FSF Application Form, the child care service accepts that they will be entering into an agreement with the ISA with regard to the conditions for use and receipt of flexible support funding. FSF must be expended in line with these procedures and for the hours and purposes approved.

F2.5 FSF Claims

Child care services will be required to submit a FSF Claim Form, available from ISAs, to the local ISA within 60 days of the support end date. Claims submitted after this time will be invalid unless the child care service has applied for and received written approval from the ISA for an extension to the 60 days.

The claim for FSF must be for the actual hours the additional staff member was employed for, up to the approved FSF hours. The claim should be accompanied by evidence such as time sheets. Only expenses incurred following the approval by the ISA may be claimed through FSF. Claims for retrospective funding will not be accepted.

For Family Day Care (FDC) Schemes or in-home care (IHC) carers who are submitting a FSF claim on behalf of a carer for out-of-hours training, the claim must be submitted within 60 days after training has been completed.

FSF is paid in arrears by the ISA directly to the child care service or the coordinating service/scheme for FDC and IHC. FSF cannot be claimed when the child care service is closed, for example, on public holidays, or when the child does not attend child care on the days that FSF has been approved.

F2.6 FSF subsidy rate

The FSF subsidy is a flat hourly rate that is indexed on 1 July each year. The rate is aligned to the ISS rate and is consistent across all states and territories.

Actual staffing costs may vary from one area to another according to the state or award level, the contract of the additional staff, and the basis on which they are employed. FSF is not intended to cover all staff costs but does provide a significant contribution to meeting these costs.

The table below provides the current FSF subsidy rates and limits that apply across the different child care service types.

F2.7 FSF Limits

Limits apply to the number of daily and annual hours of FSF a child care service can access. These limits vary according to service type and activity (see table 1 below).

Table 1: Flexible Support Funding Limits

Service Type	Funding Limit (indexed annually)
All eligible service types (excluding VC, FDC and IHC)	Services are eligible for a \$15.95 hourly contribution with a daily cap of five hours for a maximum of 20 days (or 100 hours) each year, i.e. 12 months from date of approval, in respect of each eligible child enrolled.
Vacation Care	Services are eligible for a \$15.95 hourly contribution with a daily cap of eight hours for a maximum of 10 days (or 80 hours) each year, i.e. 12 months from date of approval, in respect of each eligible child enrolled.
Family Day Care and In Home Care	<p>Services are eligible for a \$15.95 hourly contribution with a weekly cap of five hours for a maximum of five weeks (or 25 hours) each year, i.e. 12 months from the date of approval, in respect of each eligible child enrolled.</p> <p>FSF can be used to employ an additional worker to increase the staff-to-child ratio above licensing requirements on out-of-home excursions such as playgroups or vacation care excursions.</p> <p>FSF can also be used to provide a financial contribution for carers who are unable to attend specialist training during business hours. Training must relate specifically to the additional needs of a child in care. Carers are eligible for a \$15.95 hourly contribution for a maximum of 15 hours each year or 12 month period.</p> <p>FSF cannot be used to employ an additional worker within the FDC or IHC home environment.</p>
All service types	Services are eligible to apply for FSF to allow release time for permanent staff and carers to attend specialist training and/or prepare SSPs in respect of a child with ongoing high support needs. There is a combined 15-hour limit per service each year or 12 month period, for these activities. Note: Services are advised to apply for funding for these activities as required, not as a lump sum.

FSF limits apply to the service, not the child. In other words, a service enrolling a child with additional needs is eligible for the maximum FSF, regardless of whether the child has already been supported by FSF at another service. Equally, if a child has moved from one child care environment to another within the same service, and additional assistance is needed to settle the child, the service may be eligible for additional FSF up to the maximum annual limit.

In cases where the FSF allocation has been expended and funds are not available, ISA may be required to implement a 'waitlist'. In these circumstances, approved FSF Applications will be processed according to the date they were received.

If an ISA receives more than one FSF Application from a child care service for the same care environment, the ISA will be required to assess the total amount of FSF that can be approved. For example, a long day care centre that has applied for FSF funding for three children with additional needs, all of whom attend the same child care service on the same day, will not necessarily be eligible for 300 hours.

F2.8 Using FSF to attend specialist training and/or for the preparation of SSPs

Child care services may be eligible for FSF as a contribution toward engaging relief staff while permanent staff and carers attend specialist training and/or prepare SSPs in respect of a child with additional needs.

For FDC and in-home care, FSF can also be used to provide a financial contribution for carers who are unable to attend specialist training during business hours. Specialist training must be identified in a SSP and must relate specifically to the inclusion of an identified child with ongoing high support needs. It must be relevant to building the service's capacity to include these children.

For FSF Applications that seek funding to allow release time for permanent child care staff to develop a SSP, a SSP is not required. However, an FSF Application Form must be completed stating the reason for the request and the number of hours of funding being sought.

F2.9 Role and employment conditions of staff employed through Flexible Support Funding

The primary role of staff employed with FSF is to increase the staff-to-child ratio in the child care service for a time limited period when the child with additional needs is in care. Staff funded by the FSF **cannot** be used to meet state or territory licensing or regulatory requirements. Any staff funded by the FSF must be in addition to number of staff required by licensing or regulatory requirements.

Child care staff support all children in the service, and all staff in the service may be involved in providing support to the child with additional needs. However, child care staff who have been employed with FSF funds will not:

- assist the child with additional needs on a one-to-one basis

- provide specialist assistance (for example, medical assistance or physiotherapy)
- provide support that would otherwise be provided by the ISA.

The requirements of the relevant workplace relations laws must be considered when employing additional staff.

When a child is absent from the child care service the staff member employed under FSF should receive appropriate notice in line with award provisions. If employed on a casual basis, stand down provisions apply. FSF may not be claimed for public holidays, where services are closed or when the child is not attending care.

The worker employed by FSF is the employee of the child care service. In the case of FDC and IHC, the scheme or coordinator is responsible for employing the additional staff member to accompany the carer on excursion-based activities.

F3. Bicultural Support

F3.1 What is Bicultural Support?

Bicultural support provides additional resources to eligible childcare services to assist with the inclusion of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD), refugee children, and Indigenous children.

F3.2 What does the Bicultural Support Program provide?

A worker engaged by the Bicultural Support Program, can offer time-limited support from either off-site consultants or an on-site casual bilingual or bicultural worker. This support can be provided when a CALD, Indigenous, or refugee child is enrolled at the child care service. Access to bicultural support is provided to eligible child care services free of charge.

Services available within the Bicultural Support Program will be determined by the needs analysis from each state/territory and may include:

- facilitating communication between eligible child care services and families by:
 - ⇒ assisting child care workers in communicating with culturally diverse families and children (for example, interpreting meetings between parents and service staff, providing verbal translation of enrolment documents as well as child care workers with key words and phrases that can be used to communicate with the child)
- facilitating cultural awareness by:
 - ⇒ assisting child care services in better understanding particular ethnic backgrounds, cultural experiences, and child rearing practices of the children and families
 - ⇒ enabling the exchange and sharing of information between staff and parents about the child and family life
 - ⇒ providing child care workers with an understanding of relevant cultural issues
- Supporting curricula or programming by:
 - ⇒ assisting with the implementation of culturally and linguistically appropriate practices and a culturally inclusive curriculum
 - ⇒ supporting the child care service to maintain the child's bilingualism
 - ⇒ supporting the implementation of programs that support the development of English as a Second Language
 - ⇒ supporting the implementation of programs that assist newly arrived children and families from n refugee backgrounds
- Supporting resource and linkages by:
 - ⇒ providing child care workers with information, where available, about relevant community resources and services to support the inclusion of culturally diverse children and families
 - ⇒ providing bicultural advice and support to ISAs

- ⇒ working with the IPSUs to support the needs of Indigenous children in CCB funded child care services ensuring Bicultural Support meets program requirements.
- Bicultural support can **not** be used for:
 - ⇒ regular interpreting and translating assistance for families or eligible child care services
 - ⇒ supervision of a child or group of children (for example, to meet staff-to-child ratios or to provide staffing to relieve child care workers)
 - ⇒ providing settlement and community support services to families and children
 - ⇒ providing support that is available through existing programs, for example, clients of the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) using child care while they are attending English language tuition. The cost of AMEP related child care is the responsibility of the AMEP service provider.

F3.3 How does it operate?

The role of the offsite consultants is to provide specialist support for implementing inclusive programs or curricula. This role should be developed in consultation with the ISA or IPSU to avoid duplication.

The two step model for Bicultural Support includes:

- supporting services to be inclusive through skilling and capacity building of ISAs, including building ISAs awareness of specific support services available
- ensuring a consistent approach to ISA service delivery.

The placement of onsite bilingual and bicultural workers will be used to provide specific language and cultural assistance to eligible child care services.

Child care services can make a request for Bicultural Support through the ISA or the IPSU. The request must be accompanied by a Service Support Plan (SSP), which is developed by ISAs and the child care service to identify a range of inclusion support needs such as bicultural support. The template for the SSP is at section F1.

However, as Bicultural Support should be responsive, and to avoid delay, the child care service may contact the Bicultural Support provider with a request for Bicultural Support prior to the completion of a SSP. For example, the development of a SSP could commence between the ISA and the child care service over the phone. The decision to approve Bicultural Support can proceed prior to the Bicultural Support provider receiving the completed SSP.

Where a request for a Bicultural Support worker is approved, the Provider must ensure that the child care service and the region's ISA and are notified in writing of the period and purpose of the placement.

The request for bicultural support should include the written or verbal consent of the relevant parent, carer, or child care worker.

F4. Specialist Equipment

F4.1 What is Specialist Equipment?

Specialist Equipment is available on loan from the Specialist Equipment provider to eligible child care services (excluding In Home care) to assist the inclusion of a child who has demonstrated ongoing high support needs in a child care environment.

F4.2 What is available from the Specialist Equipment provider?

The specialist equipment includes, but is not limited to:

- portable ramps to create access to the environment
- standing frames and full support swings to allow the child with high physical support needs to participate in the daily child care program and activities
- hoists, slings, harnesses, change tables, commodes, toilet seats or steps, potty chairs, mobile stools and seating or posture aids for care givers to enable them to lift and transfer children safely when carrying out basic care functions, such as changing and going to the toilet
- specialised 'basic furniture' such as chairs, tables, desks and sleeping equipment
- communication cards or charts, Auslan dictionary to enable the child and carers to communicate effectively
- specialised inclusion toys such as switch sensory mats
- individualised equipment such as foam items specific to the needs of a child care environment and a child being included.

The Specialist Equipment provider **does not** provide:

- therapeutic equipment (for example, hearing aids and therapist tables)
- equipment that the service would reasonably be expected to supply
- equipment that the parent or carer would reasonably be expected to supply (for example, wheelchairs, walking frames and body suits)
- equipment for which there are hygiene issues (for example, padded cots).

Providing specialist equipment is contingent on:

- the completion of an Service Support Plan (SSP) in which the child care service demonstrates the need for specialist equipment requested to enable the inclusion of a child within the care environment
- confirmation that the child has a disability
- recommendation by the child's therapist that the equipment will support the child's inclusion in the child care service.

Given the range of potential unique needs of individual children, it is anticipated that this guide may not cover all situations. Where the guide does not explicitly address such needs or a request falls outside the scope but within the principles of the IPSP a written application from the PSC to the Department should be made to seek clarification.

F4.3 How can a child care service loan specialist equipment?

A Service Support Plan (SSP), to be completed by child care services, may demonstrate the need for specialist equipment to include a child with a disability.

Where the need has been demonstrated, the child care service is required to attach the SSP to a *Specialist Equipment Request Form* and send it directly to the Specialist Equipment provider. The form will be developed by the Specialist Equipment provider in each state/territory and be available from the PSC, IPSU or ISA. Contact details are available at Appendix A and B.

The Specialist Equipment Request Form is to be completed by a qualified professional, such as an occupational therapist or physiotherapist, who is familiar with the biomechanical functioning and needs of the child requiring the specialist equipment for their inclusion in the child care service.

A catalogue of specialist equipment items is available from the Specialist Equipment provider. Child care services and therapists are encouraged to check the catalogue prior to completing the request form. The provider may be contacted for advice on the availability or suitability of specialist equipment.

The Specialist Equipment provider will assess and commence actions relating to the request within five business days of a request form being received. The provider will notify the child care service of any delays or issues in the provision or availability of the equipment. The provider will notify the ISA or IPSU in writing that the specialist equipment has been supplied to the child care service.

The equipment will be loaned for as long as it is required and remains appropriate to the needs of the child. From time to time the ISA or IPSU will monitor the continued appropriateness and good working order of specialist equipment on loan to a child care service. When the equipment is no longer needed the child care service must immediately notify the Specialist Equipment provider to arrange the return of the equipment.

F4.4 Fitting Specialist Equipment

The eligible child care service is responsible for ensuring that specialist equipment is prescribed and fitted by an appropriate professional such as an occupational therapist or physiotherapist. This professional should have knowledge of the child's biomechanical functioning and needs.

F5. General Resources Library

F5.1 What is the General Resource Library and how can child care services access it?

The General Resource Library will provide up-to-date information and resources on child care practice and research findings and assist in meeting the inclusion and professional support needs of eligible child care services. General resources are provided on loan to eligible child care services and may include:

- in-service training materials (manuals, electronic training materials, online modules, workbooks, visual aids, audio-visual material)
- a range of printed resources such as fact sheets, pamphlets and newsletters
- journals, textbooks and professional literature
- resources that support quality programs, such as books that enable cultural inclusion and bilingual education for child care workers and children.

A child care service can access the resources through the Professional Support Coordinator's 1800 phone number, the website of the PSC or IPSU or directly to the General Resource Library provider in their state/territory. Alternatively an ISA or IPSU may refer the child care service. Contact details are available at Appendix B.

APPENDICES

A: Professional Support Contact Details – PSC and IPSU

B: NISSP and ISA Contact Details

C: Glossary

Appendix A: PSC and IPSU Contact Details

PSC	IPSU
QLD PSC Health and Community Service Workforce Council Inc Phone: 1800 112 585 (toll free) Website: http://www.pscq.org.au/	QLD IPSU Queensland Council of Social Services Inc Indigenous Children's Services Unit Phone: 1800 110 869 (toll free) Website: http://www.ipsu.com.au/
NSW PSC Children's Services Central Phone: 1800 157 818 (toll free) Website: http://www.cscentral.org.au/	NSW IPSU (including ACT) Lady Gowrie Child Centre Phone: 1800 450 472 (toll free) Website: http://www.ipsunswact.com.au
WA PSC Child Inclusive Learning and Development Australia Inc Phone: 1800 783 768 (toll free) Website: http://www.pscwa.org.au/	WA IPSU Yorganop Child Care Aboriginal Corporation Phone: 1800 788 520 (toll free) Website: http://www.ipsuwa.org.au/
SA PSC Lady Gowrie Child Centre Inc Phone: 1800 129 606 (toll free) Website: http://www.pscsa.org.au/	SA IPSU Network SA, Aboriginal Resource and Management Support Unit Phone: 1800 679 199 (toll free) Website: http://www.ipsusa.org.au/
NT PSC Child Inclusive Learning and Development Australia Inc Phone: 1800 138 662 (toll free) Website: http://www.pscnt.org.au/	NT IPSU- North Regional and Remote Aboriginal Children and Services Support Unit (RRACSSU) Phone: 1800 890 133 (toll free) Website: http://www.rracssu.batchelor.edu.au/
ACT PSC Communities at Work Phone: 1800 228 772 (toll free) Website: http://www.actpsc.com.au/	NT IPSU- Central Regional and Remote Aboriginal Children and Services Support Unit (RRACSSU) Phone: 1800 760 036 (toll free) Website: http://www.rracssu.batchelor.edu.au/
VIC PSC Community Child Care Association Phone: 1800 177 017 (toll free) Website: http://www.cccvic.org.au/	VIC IPSU Yappera Children's Services Co-operative Limited Phone: 1800 YAPPERA (toll free) Website: http://yapperachildrengservice.com/
TAS PSC Lady Gowrie Child Centre Hobart Phone: 1800 647 718 (toll free) Website: http://www.pstas.org.au/	TAS IPSU Lady Gowrie Child Centre Hobart Phone: 1800 647 718 (toll free)

Appendix B: NISSP and ISA Contact Details

National ISS Provider			
KU Children's Services	Email: issinfo@ku.com.au	Website: www.ku.com.au	Ph: 1800 824 955
Inclusion Support Agencies			
Region	Inclusion Support Agency Providers	Physical Address	Phone Number
Australian Capital Territory			
ACT	Communities @ Work	PO Box 3955 WESTON CREEK ACT 2611	02 6287 3330
New South Wales			
NSW North	Armidale & District Family Day Care Limited	PO Box 951 ARMIDALE NSW 2350	02 6772 5300
Richmond Tweed	Ballina District Community Services Association Inc	PO Box 623 BALLINA NSW 2478	02 6681 5511
NSW South East	Illawarra Children's Services	PO Box 475 CORRIMAL NSW 2518	02 4283 9900
Illawarra			
Gosford-Wyong	KU Children's Services	Building 28A The Avenue Mt Penang Parklands KARIONG NSW 2250	02 4340 5300
Hunter			
NSW South West			
St George-Sutherland			
Sydney Central North			
Sydney Inner West			
Sydney South West			
NSW Central West			
NSW West			
Sydney North West			
NSW Mid North Coast	Lady Gowrie Child Centre	84 Piper Street BATHURST NSW 2795	02 6331 4333
		PO Box 1439 DUBBO NSW 2830	02 6881 8210
Sydney North West	Penrith City Council	PO Box 60 PENRITH NSW 2751	02 4732 7846
NSW Mid North Coast	St Joseph's Family Services	Warlters Street PORT MACQUARIE NSW 2444	1800 060 481 02 6584 3865
Sydney Central West	SDN Children's Services Incorporated	28 Cowper Street GRANVILLE NSW 2142	02 9897 3635
Sydney Inner		Level 1, 3 Linthorpe St NEWTOWN NSW 2042	02 9557 0183
Sydney North		8 Rodborough Avenue CROWS NEST NSW 2065	02 9955 3665

Northern Territory			
Northern	Australian Early Childhood Association (NT Branch)	71 Coonawarra Rd WINNELLIE NT 0821	08 8947 4776
Southern	Children's Services Support Program (Central Australia)	1st Floor Eurilpa House 25 Todd Mall ALICE SPRINGS NT 0870	08 8953 4059
Queensland			
Ipswich	CAERSU – Inclusion Support Agency	35 Sittella Street INALA QLD 4077	07 3372 7979
Far North Qld	Cairns and District Childcare Development Assn Inc	108 Collins Avenue EDGE HILL QLD 4870 PO Box 489 EDGE HILL QLD 4870	07 4032 1713
Sunshine Coast	ISA – Sunshine Coast	Shop 4, Main Street PALMWOODS QLD 4555 PO Box 417 PALMWOODS QLD 4555	07 5478 9200
North West Qld	Inclusion of Children with Additional Needs Inc.	71 Camooweal Street MT ISA Qld 4825 PO Box 1863 MT ISA QLD 4825	07 4743 5888
Central West Fitzroy	Central Queensland Inclusion Support Agency – Family Day Care Association Queensland	16 Tucker Street YEPPOON Qld 4703 PO Box 215 YEPPOON Q 4703	07 4930 2388
Mackay	Mackay Region Inclusion Support Agency	256 Bedford Road ANDERGRAVE QLD PO Box 8889 MT PLEASANT QLD 4740	07 4955 4248
South West Qld Darling Downs	Garndoo Jaowair Inclusion Support Agency	PO Box 2119 TOOWOOMBA QLD 4350	07 4613 6319
Brisbane	Inclusion Support Agency Brisbane	71 Hows Road NUNDAH QLD 4012 Po Box 1040 NUNDAH QLD 4012	07 3621 5300.
Brisbane South West/Redland	Inclusion Support Agency Logan/Redlands	Unit C2 Gleneagles Ave CORNUBIA QLD 4130	07 3801 6200
Goldcoast	Inclusion Support Agency Gold Coast	Suite 15 Mermaid Plaza Crn Gold Coast Highway & Markeri Street, Mermaid Beach Qld 4218 PO Box 547 MERMAID BEACH QLD 4218	07 5595 8999

Brisbane North	Noah's Ark Inclusion Support Agency	183 Old Gympie Road KALLANGUR QLD 4503	07 3482 4884
Wide Bay-Burnett		1st Floor 200 Bazaar Street MARYBOROUGH QLD 4670 Po Box 947 MARYBOROUGH Qld 4670	07 4921 7100
North Qld	Townsville City Council	Northtown, Flinders Mall TOWNSVILLE Qld 4810 PO Box 1268 TOWNSVILLE QLD 4810	07 4727 9683
South Australia			
North East Adelaide & Mount Lofty Ranges	Inclusive Directions Incorporated	5-7 Rasheed Ave NEWTON SA 5074	08 8165 2900
Riverland		5 Kealley Rd BERRI SA 5343	08 85823266
South East SA		Lot 71 Suttontown Rd MT GAMBIER SA 5290	08 8725 0211
South West Adelaide & Kangaroo Island		1/18-20 Scholfield Rd SEACLIFF SA 5049	08 8358 2299
NW Country, Flinders Ranges & Yorke Peninsula	Novita Children's Services Incorporated	151 Greenhill Rd PARKSIDE SA 5063	08 8172 9200
Tasmania			
South East Tasmania Hobart	Lady Gowrie Child Centre Hobart (Inc)	229 Campbell Street HOBART TAS	03 6320 6840
North Tasmania	Migrant Resource Centre	95-99 Cameron Street LAUNCESTON TAS	03 6332 2218
North West Tasmania	North West Inclusion Support Agency (Burnie City Council)	80 Wilson Street BURNIE TAS	03 6430 5786
Victoria			
South East Outer Melbourne	City of Greater Dandenong	PO Box 200 DANDENONG VIC 3175	03 9239 5100
Barwon	City of Greater Geelong	PO Box 104 GEELONG VIC 3220	03 5227 0294
North Outer Melbourne	City of Whittlesea	Locked Bag 1 Bundoora MDC VIC 3083	03 9217 2301
North Middle Melbourne	Darebin City Council	PO Box 91 PRESTON VIC 3071	03 8470 8102
East Outer Melbourne	Knox City Council	Locked Bag 1 KNOX MDC VIC 3152	03 9298 8317
East Middle Melbourne	Monash City Council	PO Box 1 GLEN WAVERLY VIC 3150	03 95183 562
Bayside	Noah's Ark Inc	590 Orrong Road ARMADALE VIC 3143	03 9500 8133
Central Highlands Wimmera			
East Gippsland			
Gippsland			
Inner Melbourne			
Loddon			
Mallee			

West Metro Melbourne			
Goulburn	Scope Vic. Ltd.	PO Box 128 BENALLA VIC 3672	03 5823 5722
Ovens-Murray	Upper Murray Family Care Incorporated	PO Box 725 WODONGA VIC 3690	02 6022 8027
West Victoria	Warrnambool City Council	PO Box 198 WARRNAMBOOL VIC 3280	03 5559 4800
Western Australia			
South Metro Perth	Communicare Inc	PO Box 730 CANNINGTON WA 6987	08 9251 5736
Central WA	Child Inclusive Learning and Development Australia (Child Australia Inc)	PO Box 10381 KALGOOLIE WA 6433	08 9021 3679
		PO Box 2713 GERALDTON WA 6530	08 9923 2840
Lower Great South WA		26 Prior Street ALBANY WA 6330	08 9842 3163
North Metro Perth/Islands		PO Box 2562 MALAGA WA 6944	08 9249 4333
Pilbara		PO Box 1504 KARRATHA WA 6714	08 9143 1551
South West WA		PO Box 3148 MANDURAH WA 6210	08 9535 1936
Kimberley		PO Box 2562 MALAGA WA 6944	08 9249 4333
East Metro Perth/Midlands		The Shire of Mundaring	PO B ox 1010 MIDLAND WA 6936

Appendix C: Glossary

Word/Phrase	Definition
Action Research	<p>An approach which supports service development and effective permanent change in child care services. It is based on the premise that participants who are active in directing their learning are more likely to adopt new approaches to working in child care services.</p> <p>Action research is generally depicted as a cyclical process of change which is facilitated by a change agent or critical friend.</p> <p>The cycle begins with a series of planning and learning activities initiated by the learner and the change agent working together, that includes gathering information.</p> <p>The second stage of action research involves trialling new approaches and actions related to what was learned. The third stage of action research involves a review of the output or results and planning for the next cycle of activity.</p>
Bicultural Support Program	Provides time-limited support to child care services to assist in including children from cultural and linguistically diverse (CALD) and Indigenous backgrounds, including language assistance.
Budget Based Funding program	Funding provided under the Child Care Support Services Program to several types of non-mainstream child care services, provided by not-for-profit organisations mainly in rural, remote or Indigenous communities. The aim of the funding is to provide access to early childhood learning and child care where the market would otherwise fail to deliver these services. These services are generally not approved for purposes of administering Child Care Benefit and parents using these services are not eligible to receive Child Care Benefit or Child Care Tax Rebate. The cost to families for using these services, however, is minimal as the Australian Government meets the majority of the costs involved in providing these services.
Bilingual Support	<p>The support provided to children in child care services who speak little or no English at home. Bilingual support can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assist in providing information on the child's competency in the home language to inform child care services' expectations of their learning needs • assist in monitoring progress and assessing performance; • assist in developing language and support materials • provide help with parent liaison • help the child care service to understand children's religious and cultural needs, for example, dietary requirements.
Budget Based Funded child care services	<p>Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • flexible/innovative services • mobile child care services • Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services • Indigenous playgroups • Indigenous outside school hours care and enrichment programs • crèches • innovative child care service centres.
Care Environment	A specific setting, room or grouping of children in care, for example, a 0-2 years room in long day care or a carer's home in family day care.
Capacity Building	An approach that develops and strengthens the skills, abilities, processes and resources that child care services need to respond to challenges and change.
Change Agent	<p>An individual or organisation that supports organisations to build their capacity so that they can solve their own problems.</p> <p>The change agent can be either external or internal to the organisation. In the case of the IPSP, the ISAs, IPSUs and PSCs act as change agents to support changes in child care services that result in quality child care. The approaches used in the IPSP include the development of skills and knowledge, critical thinking and reflection.</p>

Word/Phrase	Definition
Child Care Benefit approved child care services	Include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • long day care services • outside school hours care (including vacation care) • family day care, occasional care • occasional care • in-home care services.
Critical Friend	A trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critiques of a person's work as a friend. A critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work.
Curriculum	A planned course of action leading to certain outcomes for children, and includes what is desirable, how and why it should be learnt and how it can be evaluated.
Department (the)	The Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).
DEEWR	SEE Department
Early learning	Refers to the structured learning experiences for children (from stimulation, experience and play-based activities) from birth to five years.
Framework	The higher level structure or frame within which the programs or curriculum (the content and course of action) are based. A framework will be influenced by the vision, philosophy and culture of the society related to the values, beliefs and aspirations for children and to their learning and development.
Flexible Support Funding (FSF)	Funding that enables a service to receive immediate short-term support to meet their inclusion needs, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assistance with settling a n refugee child into care • when a child with ongoing high support needs transfers to another room in a long day care centre • when a school child doesn't access ISS but extra support is required for activities such as excursions during vacation care • where it is unclear if an additional worker is required on an ongoing basis.
Human resource development	The process of equipping individuals with the understanding, skills and access to information, knowledge and training that enable them to perform effectively.
Inclusion	Access to and participation of all children, including those with high ongoing support needs, in the child care environment. This includes children with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, including refugee children.
Indigenous Playgroups	Playgroups that give young Indigenous children below school age the opportunity to socialise and interact with other children and adults. While Australian Government Child Care Benefit is not available to playgroups, Australian Government funding helps to establish and support playgroup associations, to produce newsletters and develop ideas for suitable activities.
Indigenous Professional Support Unit – IPSU	IPSUs provide professional support, advice and training to Indigenous run child care service. In addition, the IPSU works with the Professional Support Coordinator (PSC) and Inclusion Support Agencies (ISAs) in their state/territory to ensure all child care services offer quality care that is culturally appropriate, safe, and meets the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
National Quality Framework	The overarching Framework that will include the regulatory body responsible for ensuring quality in early childhood education and care; the Early Years Learning Framework; the National Quality Standards; and the Quality Rating System.
Non-eligible Child Care Services	Services that are not eligible for support under the IPSP includes, but is not limited to, registered care, early learning and care services and state/territory government services, including occasional care, preschools and early intervention programs.

Needs analysis	The process that is designed to identify the gaps between existing skill levels and desired skill levels for child care service workers. The needs analysis is the first step in planning activities.
Professional Development and Support	The advice, support, training and resources to assist child care staff or carers in providing a high-quality service as defined by the National Quality Standards. This support is to assist services in developing strategies that are sustainable in the longer term.
Professional Supervision	A process that gives professionals the opportunity to clarify and resolve, with an experienced fellow practitioner, issues and dilemmas presented by their clients and workplaces. This process has been found to reduce the risk of burn-out, enhance work performance and increase job satisfaction.
Pupil-free day	A day set by an educational institution where students do not attend school due to teacher training. Also known as multi-purpose day, curriculum day or professional development day.
Quality	Child care that is provided in accordance with the National Quality Standards
Registered Care	Care that is provided by nannies, grandparents, relatives and friends who are registered with the Family Assistance Office. It can also include care provided by private preschools, kindergartens and some outside school hours care services.
Registered Training Organisation – RTO	An organisation registered by a state or territory recognition authority to deliver training or conduct assessments and issue nationally recognised qualifications in accordance with the Australian Quality Training Framework.
Service development	<p>The activity that aims to improve an organisations' capacity for problem solving and service delivery through the establishment of effective and collaborative management systems and organisational culture, often with the assistance of a change agent and underpinned by theory and good practice.</p> <p>In the case of the IPSP, the change agent function is provided through the ISAs, PSCs and IPSUs who provide support and professional development to build the capacity of child care services to provide quality child care that is inclusive of all children.</p>
Service Support Plan	The plan developed with child care services to identify the capacity of the child care services to include a child or children with additional needs. SSPs also identify the supports that may be needed by the child care service to ensure that successful inclusion is achieved.
Specialist Equipment	Equipment recommended as necessary for the inclusion of an eligible child with ongoing high support needs. The equipment must be prescribed, fitted and reviewed by an appropriate professional, for example, occupational therapist or physiotherapist, who has knowledge of the child's biomechanical functioning and needs.
Strengths-based approach	<p>A capacity building strategy that builds on the strengths and resources of child care services.</p> <p>A strengths-based approach operates on the assumption that people have strengths and resources for their own empowerment. In a strengths-based approach the focus is on the individual, not the content. By focusing on what is working well, informed successful strategies support the adaptive growth of organisations and individuals.</p>