

# 2025 Annual Report

**The Christchurch Early Intervention Trust**  
**The Champion Centre**

July 2024 - June 2025



[www.championcentre.org.nz](http://www.championcentre.org.nz)

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# REFLECTIONS



## Our Chair, Lisa Brennan (left)

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I am pleased to present our 2024/25 Chair's Report for The Christchurch Early Intervention Trust t/a The Champion Centre. This year brought both challenges and opportunities as we continued delivering vital services to children and their whānau, while positioning the Centre for sustainable growth and greater impact.

The Champion Centre remains committed to providing multi-disciplinary early intervention services for infants and young children with significant developmental delays or disabilities and their whānau in Canterbury. We supported around 100 children through our weekly intensive programmes.

The 2024/25 financial year brought both stability and challenge. The Board recognises that to sustainably deliver and grow our services, we must bridge the gap between government contract funding and actual costs. While we achieved a welcome uplift in contract funding, the first in many years, we remain heavily reliant on generous donations from our supporters, for which we are truly grateful.

Earlier this year, we reviewed our long-term strategic plan to ensure we remain responsive to the evolving needs of children and their whānau. As we move into 2026 and beyond, our priorities will ensure financial resilience, continued service relevance, appropriate new premises, and a flourishing Champion Centre.

On behalf of the Board, I extend heartfelt thanks to:

- Our children and their whānau for entrusting us with their early-intervention journey.
- All staff and clinicians for their unwavering commitment, professionalism, and compassion in delivering intensive programmes with heart and rigour.
- Deb Nind, our CEO, for her steadfast leadership and passion for the Centre's mahi.
- Our donors, funders, philanthropists, and community supporters- your generosity makes our work possible.
- The Champion Foundation Trust team and all fundraising partners for their ongoing support.
- My fellow trustees for your governance, support, and strategic oversight throughout the year.

This year we welcomed two new trustees, firstly Liz Reece and more recently Andrew Gray. However, we are also farewelling Ruth Richardson after serving a 4 year term. Ruth, in addition to being a grandparent of a Champion Centre graduate, has generously shared her significant governance experience with us. Her belief in the value of the Centre's work has helped steer the Centre through often challenging times. Thank you for your contribution, Ruth.

This past year has been one of consolidation, resilience, and purpose. Despite a challenging funding environment, we are confident in the strength and impact of our model, mission, and values. Our children and whānau remain at the heart of all we do. As we move into 2026, the Board looks forward to working with stakeholders to strengthen and grow our services, deepen our impact, and secure long-term sustainability.

Thank you for your continued support.

Noho ora mai, Lisa

## Our CEO, Deb Nind (right)

When I wrote this piece last year, I was just six weeks into my role. What an extraordinary journey the past twelve months have been, filled with learning, and a profound appreciation for everyone who contributes to the Champion Centre and positively impacts the lives of our children.

2025 began with our annual staff training week. This rare opportunity for all staff to come together featured a varied programme, fostering learning, connection and collaboration. Importantly, it provided a platform for staff to contribute to two pivotal initiatives: the development of our strategic plan and the articulation of our core values. I was thrilled by the enthusiastic engagement from our teams, whose insights laid the foundation for our current strategic plan and will continue to guide us. The four core values they crafted, expressed in English and Te Reo Māori with support from Tāngata Whenua, are beautifully represented visually with the support of Libby Oborn, one of our past parents.

The staff contributions from the strategic planning session were shared with our Board of Trustees, who participated in a facilitated session to shape the Champion Centre Strategy. This collaborative effort allowed us to redefine our purpose and mission, drawing inspiration directly from the voices of our families.

Our purpose: Creating hope and communities where every child can thrive, reflects our commitment to supporting tamariki and whānau in our care. It also challenges us to influence the broader communities in which our children live, encouraging adaptation, understanding, and meaningful support to help make life easier and goals more attainable.

This plan was approved in April and although early days, we are making good progress on delivering on our strategic priorities through to 2027 of:

- Develop financial resilience through diversified revenue
- Deliver a service that meets the needs of tamariki and whānau
- Secure new premises that nourish tamariki, whānau, and staff
- Elevate the reputation of the Champion Centre

The Champion Centre's success depends on many people. I extend my heartfelt thanks to the Champion Centre staff for their skill and dedication to the tamariki and whānau who attend the Centre, and to our Board of Trustees for their expertise and guidance. Your support ensures we uphold the highest standards in governance and strategic direction.

To the Champion Foundation, thank you for your continued support of the Champion Centre and the Champions' Alumni. A generous donation this year supported Beccy to attend a conference in Australia and visit equivalent early intervention services in Sydney.

To our generous donors and supporters of all sizes: thank you. Your contributions bridge the gap between our contracted funding and the resources needed to deliver the comprehensive services we offer.

Finally, to our whānau who entrust us with their children's growth and development: you are the heart of our mission and our constant inspiration.

Noho ora mai, Deb

# CENTRE HAPPENINGS



Beccy



Liz

## Financial Year 2024 - 2025

Another year full of laughter and learning is behind us, and as an early intervention service we continue to seek ways to improve and expand our programme offerings to support the tamariki and whānau who entrust us with their learning journey. Here are some of our recent highlights:

### Early Intervention Teaching

We welcomed Mari Suzuki to our early intervention teaching team. We celebrated Marie Moore's completion of the Post Graduate Diploma in Early Intervention, and Leanne Stewart's achievement of a Master of Specialist Teaching. Leanne was also elected to the Teachers Council as the early childhood representative, committed to advocating for children with disabilities.

Our specialist teachers have taken on an advocacy role for learning support outside of the Champion Centre including:

- Hosting ECE students from the University of Canterbury
- Representing the Champion Centre at the Canterbury ECE connection hui
- Presenting an early intervention workshop for 3<sup>rd</sup> year ECE students at Canterbury University
- Collaborating with the New Zealand Tertiary College for an article around early intervention at the Champion Centre

### Building Expertise in Responsive Feeding: A Team Journey

The Speech Language Therapy Team, alongside our Psychologist, recently completed four days of intensive training in Responsive Feeding. The training emphasised viewing mealtimes and eating through a neurodiverse lens, recognising that feeding is not solely an oral motor skill. Instead, it is a complex experience shaped by sensory, emotional, and relational factors. The Family-Centred Responsive Feeding Framework reinforced this perspective, encouraging us to consider mealtimes within the broader context of family and whānau life.

By approaching feeding holistically, we aim to support families in creating positive, stress-free mealtime experiences that honour individual differences and promote connection. This training has strengthened our commitment to inclusive, compassionate care, and we're excited to bring these principles into our everyday work.

### Paediatric Autism Communication Therapy (PACT)

The provision of PACT, started in 2023, is now embedded into our service delivery. The PACT programme is an evidence-based early intervention programme for children with neurodiverse presentations, including autism. The research findings indicate longevity of improved child communication and social engagement.

This year, thanks to a generous donation from the J R McKenzie Trust, we have supported the training of 3 new PACT Therapists. With this new cohort of PACT Therapists, we can extend the programme to more whānau and offer PACT via telehealth, home visit, or at the Champion Centre, hopefully removing some of the barriers for whānau in accessing this intervention.

### Service Delivery and Development Lead - Beccy Creswick

In December, we were excited to appoint Beccy Creswick as our Service Delivery and Development Lead. Beccy has been a valued member of the Champion Centre team since 2010, most recently serving as the senior early intervention teacher and contributing to the senior leadership team. She also plays an important role in representing both Early Intervention and the Champion Centre at a national level through her involvement with the Early Intervention Association Aotearoa NZ (EIAANZ) and as a representative on the national Early Childhood Advisory Committee (ECAC).

### NZ Sign Language (NZSL) - Led by Liz Townshend

NZSL is a powerful tool that is utilised and integrated throughout all of our programmes to support and enable communication. This year we have delivered 7 sign language courses with an 8th planned for November. These courses are for staff, families, carers and teachers (who work with children attending the Champion Centre), with 77 participating this year so far. Mostly they are held on zoom, which has made it easier for families to join. We also regularly visit Preschools to run sessions with their staff. The beginner course explores the signs we use around the Champion Centre in the early years. Every course includes signed songs as this is a great way to learn and remember sign language. We also learn about how to use some signs when reading a book.

### Physiotherapy

This year, thanks to generous donations from the New Zealand Community Trust and the Lion Foundation, we acquired a LiteGait harness system and specialised treadmill. These tools have enabled several children to engage in partial bodyweight-supported treadmill training, significantly improving their walking skills in a safe and supportive environment. We also received a Hypervibe vibration platform, which enabled us to incorporate whole-body vibration therapy into the routines of children who benefit from additional sensory input.

We are currently expanding our Hydrotherapy programme to include a wider range of professionals, including Occupational Therapists, Speech Language Therapists, Early Intervention Teachers, and Music Therapists. Hydrotherapy not only reduces the impact of gravity, making movement more accessible, but also provides a sensory-rich, highly motivating environment. The pool is an ideal setting not just for practicing gross motor skills, but also for fostering development in communication, social interaction, and fine motor abilities.



PACT has really helped me understand (my child's) communication, and he is now saying so many words...

Testing the Hypervibe vibration platform

# WHO WE ARE

## Purpose: Creating hope and communities where every child can thrive

The Christchurch Early Intervention Trust, operating as The Champion Centre, is New Zealand's longest-running and largest centre-based early intervention service for infants and young children with significant developmental delays and disabilities. Established in the late 1970s, the Centre is located on the Burwood Hospital Campus in Christchurch and continues to have an important place in the Canterbury community.

## Mission: More than just an Early Intervention Service - A lifeline to whānau

For children with complex developmental challenges, the Champion Centre provides not just expert therapies, but hope. Through a team of expert teachers and therapists, the Centre helps children discover their voice, their joy, and their place in the world. For parents struggling with fear and uncertainty, it becomes a guiding light through the darkest moments. Every connection, every session, every act of kindness transforms lives, proving that no child is ever beyond reach when compassion and expertise come together. We are committed to:

- Supporting children to achieve their potential
- Equipping families with lifelong tools
- Fostering supportive, adaptive communities
- Recognising and optimising children's individual learning capabilities

## Our mahi: Holistic, culturally responsive, evidence-based and family-centred

Our multi-disciplinary team includes Physiotherapists, Early Intervention Teachers and Educators, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Musical Play Specialists, Psychologists, Social Workers and Technology Assisted Learning Specialists. All staff work in partnership with parents, caregivers and whānau to improve learning outcomes and tailor our support to the diverse cultural backgrounds of all families attending our services.

## The Services we offer: From birth to school

The Centre provides a range of services for children who have delays in at least two areas of development. These include:

- **Early Intervention Programme:** Weekly sessions focusing on individual developmental goals.
- **Assessment and Monitoring Programme:** For children at developmental risk due to prematurity or other health-related vulnerabilities.
- **Family Support:** Skilled Psychologists and Social Workers work closely with whānau attending the programmes.
- **Support in Early Education:** Our team of Early Intervention Educators support our enrolled tamariki to access and engage with their local early childhood centre.
- **Individual Assessments:** For children with concerns relating to their development.



A recent graduate on her way to school

### Our Values:

We are very excited to share our refreshed Champion Centre values that were beautifully designed by a past parent, which we incorporate into every session:



## OUR VALUES



Every action is taken with kindness and consideration for others



We strengthen relationships to provide belonging and community

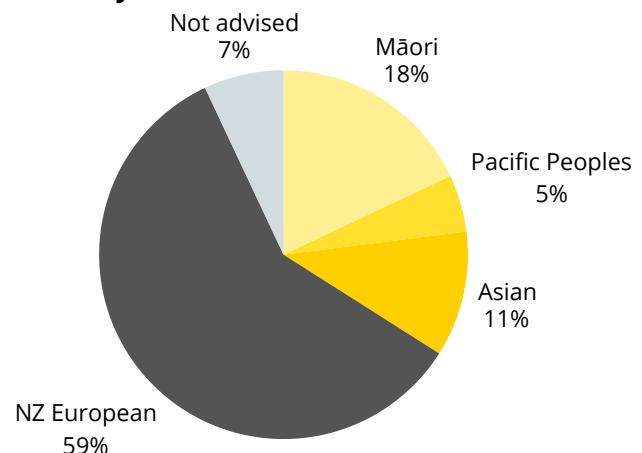


We foster independence, confidence and autonomy



We are driven to be the best through learning and discovery

## Ethnicity of Children:



# OUR IMPACT

## Roxana & C

We were lucky enough to sit down with Roxana to reflect on the past two years, attending the Centre with her daughter C.

### Their Journey to the Champion Centre

C was diagnosed with Autism at two and a half years old. At the beginning Roxana's whānau were navigating the world of disabilities through another early intervention provider, and it wasn't until Roxana started looking into other options that she found out she could change providers. This is how they discovered the Champion Centre. "It's a whole different realm compared to boys. There aren't many girls diagnosed, but actually, there are heaps with Autism, they just get overlooked as it looks different from stereotypical autistic behaviour and is often not recognised. I've done a lot of research and reading. Many girls are only diagnosed later in life. Watching C now, being here with you guys, I can actually see her developing with her Autism. I'm seeing signs and watching her grow over time. It's like whoa, I can see how people might think she's just a naughty kid or out of control. But really, her brain wiring is different."

Roxana would describe C's personality "like a hurricane", commanding every room she walks into. "It's very much her way or the highway. But she's also incredibly caring - her EIE Ange saw that during preschool visits. C has a caring side that others see more than we do - we're just boring Mum and Dad! She's loud, boisterous and rules the roost. She has a great imagination and an incredible laugh."

### PACT

When Roxana and C first started at the Champion Centre they began Paediatric Autism Communication Therapy or PACT. The PACT programme is a scientifically, evidence based early intervention programme for children with neurodiverse preventions, including Autism. "PACT was amazing. C was non-verbal, and they said it helps with communication. I honestly see how it's made a huge difference- it's changed how I communicated, my wording, my sentences, everything. Meeting her where she's at, instead of overwhelming her with big sentences".

Roxana believes PACT formed a good foundation and was a great way to start their journey. "Especially coming in at two and a half, it helped establish communication. It was great having someone else there for support. Not just to talk about C, but how the week's going. It was good having both someone to talk to, and someone who understood."

It's like having this massive blanket of support around you. Even if you're having a bad day, you can turn up and it's no judgement.

C enjoys most things at the Champion Centre, but music is definitely her favourite. "She takes command deciding "now we're doing this!" She does the other activities, but music is her jam."



### A blanket of support

Roxana finds having support in one place with access to a range of support on a weekly basis very beneficial. "It's like having this massive blanket of support around you. Even if you're having a bad day, you can turn up and it's no judgement. If we hadn't had early intervention here, I'd be a mess. You have to change your whole parenting approach. There's no right or wrong in parenting, but what you thought was the way to go you have to turn it upside down with a neurodiverse child. You've got people who've worked in this field for many years. They look at C and go, "Textbook." She now has an official Autism diagnosis. Juliana is doing her ADHD write-up this term into next, and she's also PDA (Pathological Demand Avoidance)."

### Programme highlights and growth

C enjoys most things at the Champion Centre, but music is definitely her favourite. "She takes command deciding "now we're doing this!" She does the other activities, but music is her jam." Roxana said. While finding it challenging, Roxana appreciates the free play sessions. "I'm a very on-the-go person, so free play is hard for me, but I know it's good for us. It forces me to slow down and play with C. At home, you don't always do that. You're in the kitchen, doing dinner, washing, cleaning etc. Here, I can just see her. Even in a park, I'm on edge with no fences, no safety. But at the Centre, it's safe. I'm forced to stay, to be present. It's good for me, and good for C."

### Final reflections

Overall, Roxana has seen heaps of growth in C during their time at the Champion Centre. Their time here has not only been beneficial for C, but has also been a support system for Roxana, helping her expand her knowledge and build a toolkit to continue supporting C beyond their time here. "Alongside my own research, I have a day every week where I can bounce ideas off people. They see things in C that I don't. I can ask, "Is this normal kid stuff or neurodiverse stuff?" And it's not just staff you get helpful tips from, other families help too. You relate to each other. With neurodiverse kids, it's a spectrum and every child is different. C might be verbal now, but I can't take her out and about easily. Another child might be non-verbal, but can do things I'd love C to do. It's so different for every family."



C at the Champion Centre

# OUR FUNDING



To all of our supporters, we are deeply grateful for your passion and commitment.



## Supporting the Champion Centre: A Community Effort

While the Champion Centre receives partial government funding through the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Education, we continue to face an annual shortfall. This is due to our unwavering commitment to delivering essential services that extend beyond our contractual guidelines. Without our fundraising efforts and the generosity of our community, vital programmes, such as Musical Play Therapy and Technology-Assisted Learning, would not be available to the families we support.

To ensure our services continue to run smoothly to such a high standard, we rely heavily on the generosity of individual and corporate donors, grant-making trusts and organisations, private trusts, and community groups. We extend our heartfelt thanks to our regular givers, payroll donors, and everyone who has fundraised on behalf of the Champion Centre. Your kindness and generosity enable us to continue providing early intervention to the wider Canterbury community.

The Champion Foundation Trust, established to build a capital fund securing the Centre's long-term sustainability, also plays a vital role in supporting the families we serve. The Foundation contributes through initiatives such as the sale of Earlybird books, annual donations, and the coordination of the Champions' Alumni Association, which supports graduate tamariki and their whānau.

To all of our supporters, we are deeply grateful for your passion and commitment. Thanks to you, the Champion Centre has impacted the lives of over 3,000 children and their families over our long history. We are proud to be part of such a caring and engaged community- one that consistently steps up to support our mahi.



**Music Kete - kindly donated by the George Sevicke Jones Estate, who is managed by Perpetual Guardian:** This kete is more than a collection of instruments; it's a bridge between children, a spark for creativity, and a tool for inclusion. We believe these will foster rich, musical moments, where every child feels seen, heard and celebrated.

## Some of our Champion Supporters:

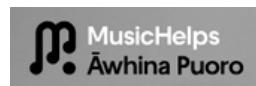
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# THANK YOU SUPPORTERS

## Family Feedback:

Results from our 2025 Whānau survey show that we have continued to provide families with the support they need. We received an overall net promotor score of 4.55 out of 5, identifying very high levels of whānau satisfaction. A satisfaction score of 4.39 out of 5 was recorded in answer to the statement "I am provided with the tools I need to support my child's needs and development".

Here are some of the other compliments we have received from families who speak to the Champion Centre's impact on their lives. A huge thank you to all whānau for completing our annual survey.



“ We would be lost without the help and support the Champion Centre provides. The support which E has received has helped his development in ways that would not have been possible without the Champion Centre! ”

“ As a parent (I appreciate) having our views and opinions acknowledged. Sessions are focused on what our child likes. The joy and kindness of the team is inviting and makes it a fun place to visit. ”

“ We love the Champion Centre's approach to learning is specifically tailored to our child's needs and capabilities. We feel you strike a good balance between challenge and approachability in the activities arranged for our child. ”

“ (I like) how genuine, kind and competent the staff are and how welcoming the whole team and environment are. I feel listened too and I love how they delight in my child. ”



“ I think the Champion Centre is a great place and hope it continues to be a safe, inclusive, family oriented Centre for many years to come. The staff work hard and are skilled in what they do. We love all the music throughout the programs and how the staff make the programme fun every week. ”



“ You're all doing a wonderful job supporting the needs of all our children! ”

“ The staff are all lovely and adaptable to my child's needs. The staff have good knowledge in their fields of expertise and make the programme fun for my son. ”

“ You are all absolutely amazing and I feel so grateful and lucky to have such a wonderful service available to our whānau. Thank you! ”

# AROHANUI

"Thank you for seeing the beautiful, the magical, the capable in our girl, and for celebrating all the little things with us as if they were huge".

Our whānau has been supported in a million different ways by the wonderful staff at Champion Centre.

"From our perspective you have gone above and beyond for us at so many crucial moments, and made things we didn't think possible, happen."

"You're all wonderful people and doing such a great job, from reception ladies with their warm hellos through to the team who worked with H"



## For more updates:

Make sure you follow us on our social media platforms for more insight into our mahi:



[www.championcentre.org.nz](http://www.championcentre.org.nz)



[www.facebook.com/thechampioncentre](http://www.facebook.com/thechampioncentre)



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[www.linkedin.com/company/The-Champion-Centre](http://www.linkedin.com/company/The-Champion-Centre)

## Looking ahead:

If you have any fundraising ideas to help us continue our important work in the Canterbury community, please get in touch as we'd love to hear from you!



## THE CHAMPION CENTRE

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