



Beyond the Difference



The Champion Centre

TAMARIKI TOIORA

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The Mission Statement





To provide **high quality** whānau and family-based early intervention services for families who have children with multifaceted developmental delay or who are at risk of developmental delay, to **educate** about early intervention and to act with parents of children with special needs as **advocates** for adequate and appropriate community services for them and their children.



The **Champion** **Centre** Service

The Champion Centre offers services for children who have special needs or children whose developmental progress is at risk. Children who attend the centre have a wide range of special needs. These include Down syndrome, other genetic disorders, cerebral palsy, extreme prematurity, epilepsy, developmental dyspraxia, ASD and brain injury.

We offer a number of services at the Centre including

-  an early intervention programme for children from birth to school age who have delays in at least two areas of development;
-  a specialist early intervention programme for children with relating and communicating difficulties;
-  a monitoring programme for children who are at developmental risk either because of prematurity or because of some other health-related vulnerability;
-  individual assessment for children for whom there are questions about their development;

Highly qualified and experienced staff work in partnership with parents/caregivers to provide a family-focused, strengths-based early intervention or monitoring programmes.

Our Early Intervention Programme

In our early intervention programme, small group sessions are held weekly/fortnightly at the centre. At each session, the child is seen individually by a core therapy team of a physiotherapist or occupational therapist, early intervention teacher and speech-language therapist. A social worker is an integral part of the team.

An integrated individual therapeutic programme is developed for each child by the team with the family/whānau. It is based on Te Whāriki (the early childhood curriculum) and is carried out by the family/whānau in their own home/community.

When the child is three years of age, an early intervention educator joins the team to support the child in their community early childhood centre.

Children's learning and development is extended through the provision of specialist programmes, music, play, computer, in addition to the "core" therapy team. Specific therapy is available for children who have feeding, sensory, behavioural and relating and communicating difficulties.

As the child approaches school age, the team assists the parents/caregivers in their preparation for inclusion in an appropriate primary school setting. The Champion Centre offers a unique transition to school process.

Our early intervention programmes include these innovative therapies.....

Learning through Music Therapy

The Champion Centre recognises that a musically nurturing environment can provide ongoing, insightful, caring support for parents, providing musical strategies to help them interact playfully with their child.

The music programme which is offered to children individually as well as within a group, provides opportunities for playfulness, warmth, humour and love and gives the child a crucial experience of success, helping to build self-esteem.

This programme recognises that each child has an inherent musicality regardless of disability. Music is a powerful non-verbal form of communication which helps children to feel included and safe.

Learning through Computer Programme

Some children may never speak and may need to use a computer as a primary means of communication. For other children, the computer is an exciting and highly successful means to enable them to develop the skills needed to access learning opportunities. This programme is aimed at engaging the child and parent in an enjoyable learning experience. The repetitive nature of computer programmes is reinforcing for learning, and the colour and sound involved in them is very motivating for each child.

The sight of the child enjoying and succeeding on the computer is often a source of pride for parents.

The Learning through Play Programme

The play environment contains a safe and attractive play area for children and their families. This environment is flexibly arranged to suit a wide range of developmental needs, enabling a child to play with and explore age appropriate equipment set out in the playroom and playground.

The play coordinator has the qualities and skills to ensure the atmosphere is welcoming and friendly for families and that there are opportunities for parents to socialise and support each other.

The play coordinator implements the play strategies determined for each child and models appropriate interactions.

Relating & Communicating Programme

The Relating and Communicating programme is for children who have difficulties in their ability to be in relationship with others. These difficulties may be shown through making limited eye contact, finding unfamiliar situations and change difficult, being rigid or repetitive in play, finding it difficult to understand others, and finding it difficult to communicate in ways that most people around them understand. Such children are usually very anxious because they cannot make sense of their world, particularly the world of people.

The Relating and Communicating Programme is an additional programme that parents and children are invited to attend for a period of time, either instead of (or sometimes in conjunction with) our standard programme. Families have weekly individual sessions with a therapy team that may involve an occupational therapist, speech language therapist, psychologist and music specialist depending on the needs of the child. Activities are all designed to be emotionally reassuring and playful; and are individually tailored to the interests and needs of each child.



Monitoring Programme for Babies and Children at Developmental Risk

The monitoring service monitors the development of the children who are either born prematurely or who have other health-related vulnerabilities, from referral until 4 years of age.

NICU paediatricians usually refer babies whom they consider to be at risk for developmental difficulties.

The purpose of the service is to monitor the children as they grow to ensure their development is keeping up with other children of the same age.

Babies and their parents/caregivers attend weekly sessions for the first few months. This is a time for sharing techniques of handling, interaction and play, which will assist the baby's learning and general development. Individual needs and concerns are discussed to complement and support parenting within family situations.

Regular assessment and monitoring sessions then take place at 8, 12, 18, 24, 36 and 48 months. At these sessions the child and parents/caregivers are engaged in a positive assessment process which is play-based and child-friendly, to elicit the child's best performance.

The sessions end with a discussion, which covers the child's strengths and needs, and may include play suggestions to encourage development in specific areas. A report of the assessment findings is sent to the parent/caregivers, the referring paediatrician and GP. If any concerns are identified at any stage, an intervention plan is put in place.

Jacks mother says: “as first-time parents and having a premature baby, we knew little of what to expect in terms of his development. The Champion Centre provided the guidance needed with skilled therapists working in a relaxed and supportive environment to help us through the crucial first month and year”





Developmental Assessment

Developmental assessments provide a screening assessment for children referred with concerns regarding their developmental progress. The multi-disciplinary team works together to assess a child's developmental strengths and needs.

Referrals for assessment can be made by the needs assessment service (life-links) or ACC.

The Purpose of the assessment is to:

- 1 Identify developmental strengths and needs and make recommendations for intervention
- 2 Provide a starting point for intervention

In addition, when the family has chosen the Champion Centre as their early intervention service. The assessment will:

- 1 Determine whether or not criteria for entry to the Champion Centre are met
- 2 Identify the most appropriate group placement within the Champion Centre

The Parents/Caregivers are actively engaged in the assessment process, which is play-based in a child friendly environment to elicit the child's best performance. A comprehensive report details strengths and needs in all areas assessed and recommends interventions if appropriate.

Early Intervention Educators

The early intervention educators (EIE) provide support and teaching to children in their Early Childhood Centre (ECC), for example kindergarten, play centre, Montessori. They work alongside the ECC staff and parents to enable the child with special learning needs to access the curriculum and environment. The EIE is part of the Champion Centre interdisciplinary team and her role is to support the child in the ECC to build communication skills, interactions and friendships with his/her typically developing peers.

When children turn 3, they are able to have an EIE for one or more sessions at their ECC. This is an opportunity for the learning goals to be practiced and generalised in the early childhood setting. These goals are based on Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum, and are guided by the principals of empowerment, holistic development, relationships, family and community.

When the child is ready to be transitioned into school the EIE takes the child on visits to school, and spends several sessions at school with the child once he/she is enrolled. The EIE facilitates the settling of the child in this new environment and along with the therapy team, can pass on knowledge of the child and his/her special needs, to the child's teacher and teacher aides.

“I knew my child for the first time. He seemed to

***open up
and I could see him,
the relief
is enormous”***

Comment from a parent

*They work alongside the
ECC staff and parents
to enable the child with
special learning needs
to access the curriculum
and environment.*

Transition Into School

A successful transition has positive benefits for everyone involved!

We believe our transition process makes a difference to the inclusion of the child and in supporting the classroom teacher. We are flexible in our approach to this process with our main focus on being the best outcome for each child and his or her family.

Our aim is to ensure a smooth transition process for the child, the family and the school. To enable this to happen we offer a gradual transfer of information and knowledge about the child together with facilitation for building new relationships necessary for the child.

The transition into school, for each child, is supported by a person well known to this child – his or her early intervention educator. The role of the early intervention educator is critical in preparing the child, in this new unfamiliar context, to succeed.

The belief of the Transition into School Programme is “all children are unique”. Each has unique capacity.

Carole Wright, head of junior school - speaking about the Champion

Centre staff said: “the staff are outstanding. They not only display a high degree of professionalism but also deal with the children, parents and their prospective teachers in a positive, warm and sensitive manner. Their support of parents who are feeling fragile, vulnerable and sometimes in shock is superb. They help the parents to come to terms with their child’s learning needs and help them to set realistic goals for these tender little people. In their liaisons with the child’s prospective school they nurture the transition period carefully, providing the child and family with a professional advocate for their learning needs ensuring that the start to school is as smooth and constructive as possible. I am totally in awe of the skills and professionalism of these people. I find watching them and working with them an inspiration”

Key Aspects of the **Champion Centre** Model

The Champion Centre has an international reputation for providing a high quality early intervention programme, and exemplifying how theory is translated into best practice.

Regular attendance allows the children and their parents/caregivers to form relationships with the therapists and social workers that are both supportive and empowering.

Small group sessions encourage friendships to develop, between children and parents/caregivers, that continue long after they have left the centre.

A “wrap-around” service includes visits by a dietician, podiatrist, and visual and hearing resource specialists, early childhood centres and schools.

The sharing of knowledge is key, and the consideration is always of “the possibility” for children and their families/whānau.

The model promotes the development of advocacy within parents and professionals.

It is a programme which celebrates the whole child and his/her family/whānau and which is recognised on the international stage for early intervention.





The Champion Centre facilities are designed to maximise the opportunity for children to interact optimally with each other and for the specially trained staff, with the parent/caregiver, to observe, to educate, and to provide a team approach so critically important when assisting children with special needs

- ✕ The Champion Centre is a licensed early childhood centre and opportunities for supervised play in the well-equipped playrooms are part of the programme
- ✕ A beautiful purpose built playground provides physical challenge for the children and allows them to actively explore in a safe environment
- ✕ The centre is well resourced with specialist play equipment that is used to promote development in all areas

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