



<b>Policy Name:</b>	<b>Intake and Referral Policy</b>	<b>Policy Number:</b>	<b>ELP-002</b>
Date Approved:	21 <sup>st</sup> February, 2018	Approved By:	Management Committee
Date Issued:	22 <sup>nd</sup> February, 2018	Review Date:	21 <sup>st</sup> February, 2021

## 1. Aim

The purpose of this policy is to outline Early Links' approach to providing services to children/Young People in the Early Childhood Intervention Program that meet the eligibility criteria. We aim to have transparent and fair referral and priority of placement procedures.

Procedures in managing the entry into our services are in line with the Early Links Philosophy and are guided by the principles of:

- Transparency
- Integrity
- Collaboration
- Inclusion
- Flexibility
- Strength Based Approach
- Adherence to funding body requirements

Early Links is committed to ensuring that everyone who approaches the organisation for service is assisted either with access to the service or with an alternative strategy that addresses their needs.

The organisation will:

- operate with clear criteria for eligibility and priority for service access
- apply these criteria in a fair, equitable, ethical and transparent manner
- provide information and referrals for clients who are ineligible for the service, unable to access the service for other reasons or who require the service of other agencies.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to families who wish to access the Early Childhood Intervention Program service, Early Links staff who work in the Early Childhood Intervention Program service and any other professionals that play a role in the referral process.

## 3. Policy

Early Links will provide services to children/Young People that meet the eligibility criteria by following transparent and fair referral and priority of placement procedures.

### 3.1 Determining Eligibility

For a child/Young Person to be eligible to receive an Early Links service, families must be living in the Maitland, Cessnock, Muswellbrook, Singleton, Upper Hunter or Dungog Local Government Areas. The child must:

- a) Be aged 0-12 years with significant delays in two or more areas of development OR
- b) Be at risk of developmental delay OR
- c) Have a diagnosed disability or disorder.

Families living outside the nominated service areas are welcome to apply to the General Manager for an exemption from this criterion if they believe Early Links is the most appropriate agency to support their child.

Where children/Young People do not meet the eligibility criteria Early Links will provide information about other early intervention alternatives or community supports.

### 3.2 Referral for an Early Links service

Referrals for an Early Links service can be received from:

- Parents/caregivers or other family members.
- Professionals connected with the child/Young Person (with parental permission). This includes educators, medical specialists including Allied Health, support workers and case workers.

Referrals are made by contacting Early Links and completing a **Request For Service** form. Alternatively, a specialist report will suffice as a referral.

### 3.3 Accepting Referrals

The Early Links General Manager is responsible for developing, documenting and following clear and fair procedures for managing referrals. These procedures are stored electronically and are reviewed annually.

Information on referral pathways is included on the Early Links website and in the promotional brochure for this service.

### 3.4 Priority of Placement Offers

In the event that appropriate service places are limited, or if children/Young People are referred concurrently, priority for placement will be determined for all Early Links services by assessing the following:

- The family's current strengths and areas for support.
- The developmental, educational and other needs of the child.
- The nature, extent and relevance of the services that a child/family currently access.
- Other significant issues such as transfer from another program.
- Urgent prioritisation as recommended by other agencies e.g. Community Services.

For children/Young People who are placed on the waiting list a letter is sent by the Admin Team to the family that includes:

- Information about referral details to other support services.
- Interim support suggestions and information about Early Links.

Children's details remain on the waiting list unless families advise that other options have been found and an Early Links service is no longer required.

### 3.5 Offer of a Placement for an Early Links service

The Early Links Operational Manager is responsible for developing, documenting and following clear and transparent procedures for offering of a placement for an Early Links service.

### 3.6 Appeal of Early Links Decision

Families have the right to appeal a decision not to offer a placement for an Early Links service. Appeals will be considered by the General Manager with involvement from the Management Committee where required.

## 4. Making Referrals

The Administration Officer will be responsible for maintaining an accurate and current contact and referral database. The data base will be maintained on the administration computer / Share drive folder.

Informal referrals are made by providing the client with contact information about other services or agencies.

Formal referrals are made to other agencies by the Key worker following discussion with other staff involved and the Program Manager. When a referral is made to another agency, the staff member making the referral will ensure that:

- confidentiality and privacy of the child / family is maintained at all times
- they have clarified with the client the service needs they have expressed
- the client is given an accurate picture of the other agency and its service
- the other agency is given full and honest referral information
- records of contact with the child / family and the other agency are kept

## 5. References

### Disability Service Standards

<b>Standard 5 - Service Access</b>	
Practice Requirement 1	Service providers make information available about their services
Practice Requirement 2	Service providers have clearly defined processes to access services
Practice Requirement 3	Service providers work with other organisations to increase each person's support options

Education and Care Services National Regulations (draft 2011)

All hard copy documents are uncontrolled.

Contact staff for Early Links are responsible for:

- Ensuring referrers and families are aware of eligibility criteria.
- Developing, documenting and following procedures for offering of a placement.
- Providing information about early intervention alternatives and support suggestions.
- Ensuring referrers and families are aware of eligibility criteria.
- Processing any referrals from families or other services
- Sending a letter to families added to the waitlist.

The General Manager is responsible for:

- Responding to any appeals in consultation with the Management Committee.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented, upheld and reviewed.

Management Committee is responsible for:

- Responding to any appeals in consultation with the General Manager.
- Approval of this policy.

## 6. Definitions

**ADHC** - Ageing Disability and Homecare, government department.

**Management Committee** – the governing body of Early Links, comprised of elected or appointed members who jointly oversee the activities and legal responsibilities of the organisation.

**General Manager** – refers to the General Manager who is responsible for supervising Early Links staff members.

**Program Manager** – refers to the Program Manager who is responsible for supervising Early Links staff members.

**Operations Manager** – refers to the Operations Manager who is responsible for supervising Early Links staff members.

**Staff** – refers to employees and volunteers of the organisation.

**Client** – any person for whom Early Links provides a service.

**Family** – refers to the parents/caregivers of the children/Young People that are clients of the organisation.

**Visitor** – any person who is visiting an Early Links service who is not a staff member, client or family.

### **Document review history**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Change</b>
November 2017	All	Updated role title from Service Manager to General Manager
February 2018	6	Added Program & Operations Manager definitions

This policy must be read in conjunction with the Policies and Procedures which support this policy.

Additional Needs Policy	ELP-007
Relationships with Children Policy	ELP-030
Technology Usage Policy	ELO-020
Social Network & Usage Policy	ELO-016

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