



Ashton's Place

Supporting children with Autism

RESEARCH, IMPACTS ON SOCIETY AN ACE OBJECTIVE

Research comes alive and can be actively engaged with, enabling ongoing longitudinal studies. The findings from these studies can have an immediate impact on the lives of the children they touch.

Ashton's Place has access to widespread state-of-the-art early learning environments that facilitate the practical implementation of research findings. This ensures that positive research findings are able to be embedded in the ACE Programme, where they will have immediate impact, have proven results, and bring about societal change.

Investment in the future – ‘What can we do now to ensure future success?’ We can take the research from external sources, learn from it and when necessary act on it.

Autism Spectrum Australia states:

An early diagnosis followed by early intervention provides the best opportunities for a child with autism.

Early intervention, specialised education and structured support can help develop an individual's skills. Every individual with ASD will make progress, although each individual's progress will be different. Progress depends on a number of factors including the unique make up of the individual and the type and intensity of intervention.

With the support of family, friends and service providers, individuals with ASD can achieve a good quality of life.



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Below are a variety of research papers supporting the need for funding to be available to parents and families who have had a child diagnosed with Autism.

Please note there is no available statistics on Gold Coast - Queensland

The Australian Government's 2012 *Guidelines for Good Practice* recommends 15-25 hours a week of autism-specific early intervention. The amount of intervention is usually described as number of hours of treatment per week. Fifteen to twenty-five hours per week is generally recommended for autism early intervention in the research literature (Roberts & Prior, 2006) with some programs recommending as much as 40 hours per week.

Sadly, most Australian children currently receive much less than this amount. Yet, it is what experts advise, and what has been proven to provide the best outcomes.

In 2012, the authors of the Australian Government *Guidelines for Good Practice* noted:

"Only a small number of autism treatment programs have direct research evidence supporting their effectiveness, and there is continuing need for further research. Most interventions have not been evaluated adequately and many have not been evaluated at all.

Several years later, the situation is unfortunately not a whole lot better.

Until recently, families received limited early intervention funding through the Federal Government's Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) package, which could be used to access services provided by HCWA-registered providers. Now, as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is rolled out throughout the country, most families are transitioning to this scheme. More information on the transition process is available on the Department of Social Services website." ¹



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There's no getting around it — intensive early intervention is expensive. For it to be effective the therapist: child ratio should ideally be 1:1 but at minimum 1:3. These teachers, therapists, and child-care personnel should be specifically trained in working with children with autism, have knowledge and skills required for their special needs, and another important attribute

“... the most important quality that teachers and therapists should have, which transcends academic qualifications, is the ability to engage your child. The best therapists can look past the autism symptoms and see the child within; they will know how to laugh and play and have fun, but also how to impose discipline in a kind and consistent manner. Your child will really enjoy being with these people and learn best with them...” (Quote from [The Complete Autism Handbook](#))

Unfortunately, many providers are still not offering families anywhere near the recommended 20 hours a week of high quality, autism-specific early intervention.

Previously, the cost of intensive early intervention meant it was beyond the reach of many Australian families. It was hoped that the introduction of the NDIS would mean that all young children with autism would be able to have access to fully-funded early intervention programs. Regrettably, this is not proving to be the case, with many families still finding they have to fight for their entitlements. ²

REFERENCES:

1 Early Intervention for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: 'Guidelines for Good Practice' 2012. Margot Prior and Jacqueline Roberts

2 Autism Awareness Australia. 2018, www.autismawareness.com.au/therapies/early-intervention/