Children with additional needs benefit from support with their learning, development and wellbeing.

**Suggestions for families**

- There are times when you might need to advocate for your child by letting others know about your child’s need(s) and promoting positive change to work towards having these met.
- Share your experiences with educators and health professionals to support your child’s development, mental health and wellbeing.
- Encourage opportunities to enhance your child’s social and emotional skills.
- Talk about and express emotions with your child.
- Provide opportunities for children to develop friendships and support these as needed.
- Support and acknowledge siblings as they may sometimes feel left out (e.g., organise special one-to-one time to do something they enjoy).
- Access support or information that will help you look after yourself and make decisions for your child (e.g., the Better Health Channel).
- Remember that self-care is important. For more information on looking after yourself refer to Component 3: Working with parents and carers: ‘Positive mental health for parents and carers’.

**Suggestions for educators**

- Become informed about the needs of the children at your service by seeking out and sharing information.
- Work with families and health professionals to implement strategies that support children’s development and wellbeing.
- Build on children’s and families’ strengths.
- Promote accepting and caring attitudes in your ECEC service, including relationships among children.
- Provide opportunities for families to socialise with others at the ECEC service and build connections (e.g., hold a morning tea for parents and carers, or a lunch so families can get to know each other, invite parents and carers into your service to help support children’s learning).
- Recognise that the needs of all children and families will be different and will also change over time.
- Provide regular feedback to families regarding their child’s achievements, in addition to highlighting goals and areas of support.
Suggestions for creating a supportive environment

To create a supportive and inclusive environment for children with additional needs it can be helpful to consider factors that can influence an environment, including:

- attitudes and beliefs about additional needs
- fears about being able to support and include children with additional needs
- information from health professionals and support organisations so you are able to be informed and plan for children with additional needs
- children’s feelings of isolation and vulnerability
- physical barriers (i.e. size and structure of a service)
- amount and impact of sensory stimuli (e.g., noise levels and lighting that can influence children)
- support from peers to build an inclusive environment (i.e. colleagues or other family members)
- opportunities to create a positive learning environment
- beliefs that all children have strengths and capacities
- providing reinforcement to children through things that personally motivate them, such as following their interests (e.g., making time to read a favourite story book together) and positive statements (e.g., ‘Tommy looked like he was really happy when you gave him a turn with the train.’).