

LCSA Supplementary Information

Inquiry into foundational and disability supports available for children and young people in New South Wales

27 June 2025

The role of neighbourhood centres in information, referrals and capacity building for children with a disability

Neighbourhood centres provide information, referrals and assist in capacity building as a central part of their work. While this can happen through the Targeted Earlier Intervention program in child protection, it also happens as part of the many program streams that a neighbourhood centre has running at any given time, or it may be entirely unfunded.

Sometimes the task for staff is simply to understand that all families present differently, and work with the family in front of them. In many families, extended family members play a big role in a child's life – a grandparent, aunt, or sibling may be as involved as parents in that child's life. In those cases, siblings or grandparents might need support, the family may need access to food and loans, and meeting these needs can be as important as therapy and direct disability support. The parameters of casework are too narrow to reflect this work.

The following case study is from The Parks Community Network in South-Western Sydney.

Case study: Helping a Grandparent Carer Navigate Complex Systems

A grandmother caring for her grandson with additional needs was struggling to manage NDIS processes, school communication, and housing challenges.

The Parks Community Network supported her by:

- Assisting with NDIS paperwork and advocating for her at school support meetings.
- Referring her to local services for housing maintenance and utility assistance.
- Connecting her with a carer support group, providing her with emotional support and peer connection.

As a result, she was able to secure the services her grandson required, maintain stable housing, and reduce the sense of isolation she felt in her caregiving role.

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How neighbourhood centres, through the Targeted Earlier Intervention program, keep kids with disabilities out of the crisis end of child protection

Supporting the families of children with a disability and strengthening the family unit's connection to their communities is essential work of neighbourhood centres – not just in keeping kids out of the pointy end of the child protection system, but in helping them and their families thrive.

Neighbourhood centres support people as their needs change over the course of a lifespan, a way of working that should underpin any future iteration of foundational supports.

The following case studies are from The Parks Community Network in South-Western Sydney.

Case study 1

A family has a 6-year-old son with a disability. Facing social isolation and financial stress, they were at risk of child protection involvement. The Parks Community Network connected them with practical supports such as respite care, school holiday programs, and food relief.

Through ongoing, trusting relationships with centre staff, the family strengthened their community connections and gained valuable parenting strategies. This support reduced their stress and helped keep the family together — preventing the need for child protection intervention.

Case study 2

A family with three children—including one child with a significant physical disability—was referred to The Parks Community Network due to high parental stress and signs of school disengagement among the siblings.

The centre provided:

- Access to a youth program for the siblings, offering fun, inclusive activities and opportunities to build friendships.
- Inclusive school holiday outings that allowed the whole family to participate, easing planning pressure on the parents.

- A counselling referral for the parents to help them manage stress and strengthen family communication.

Outcome: The family reported stronger community connections and an overall improvement in family wellbeing.