

## **Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention Programs**

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

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## 1. What are Learning for Life's Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention (EIBI) Programs?

Learning for Life's EIBI programs involve the design and delivery of a home and community based Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) program through regular and frequent therapy sessions which incorporate large amounts of play, tailored specifically to each child's individual needs.

Each child's EIBI program is designed by an experienced Clinical Consultant, who is responsible for overseeing the individual learning goals appropriate to the child. A team of Therapy Assistants deliver the program by way of regular therapy sessions conducted in the child's home and other community settings (e.g. at kinder or playgroup).

We offer two different EIBI programs:

- (a) **Full Service Model**: Learning for Life provides all the resources required by the family to conduct the program, consisting of:
  - a Clinical Consultant who designs the individualised program, leads the team of Therapy Assistants and runs the fortnightly team clinic meetings;
  - a team of Therapy Assistants delivering the therapy sessions (whereby Learning for Life hires, trains, schedules, pays and manages each Therapy Assistant); and
  - supply of all program stimuli and related materials.
- (b) **Consultancy Model**: A Learning for Life Clinical Consultant designs the individualised program for the child and leads fortnightly team clinic meetings, but the family recruits, trains, pays and manages the team of Therapy Assistants that deliver the program as well as developing and maintaining the program stimuli and resources.

The number of hours of therapy undertaken by a child within their program depends upon the individual circumstances of the child, but both models include a 2 hour fortnightly team meeting with the supervising Clinical Consultant, each Therapy Assistant and the family present. This meeting is an important part of assessing progress, setting learning goals and ensuring consistency in approach to targeting goals.

## 2. What is ABA?

**Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA)** is an evidence-based intervention approach that assesses an individual's behaviours and works to both increase positive learning and decrease those behaviours which may be socially isolating, physically harmful or which present a significant speedbump to learning. Primarily, ABA is about helping an individual to learn or re-learn how to achieve, to live life fully, and to reach their potential.

ABA focuses on breaking down complex skills, to smaller, more achievable steps. ABA achieves effective results, has an immediate impact and uses practical ideas. Children are never punished for failing to master a task, but every achievement is rewarded with enthusiastic encouragement.

A typical EIBI ABA therapy session involves teaching a child specific skills, whether that be identifying colours, learning to hold a spoon, learning sounds or words, or simply learning to play. The skill or task is broken down into its most simple form and taught in a way appropriate for that child. Each one of the sessions is documented and results recorded so that problem areas may be accurately identified and targeted. ABA relies on success and positive reinforcement and every achievement is rewarded with enthusiastic encouragement.

ABA is used in a wide range of settings, such as medical, educational, mental health, rehabilitation, and health and exercise. It is recognised as one way for people on the autism spectrum to “learn how to learn” and has been subjected to rigorous scientific investigation around the world.

### **3. What is ABA at Learning for Life?**

Every program at Learning for Life is tailored specifically to the child, taking into account the child’s (and their family’s) preferences, strengths, interest, needs and challenges. Our practice reflects our core belief that the children we work with have the right to the same choices, opportunities and experiences of all children and that their rights and choices are important. We promote children’s inclusion in their natural environment through participation in daily routines, at home, in the community and in early childhood education settings. We also recognise the importance of family and seek to ensure parents have the information, resources and support needed to participate in and benefit from the program.

Therapy sessions are predominantly conducted in the child’s home. In addition to enabling reinforcement of involvement in daily routine tasks, home based therapy allows for more natural family involvement and, in turn, greater rate of skill generalisation across people and settings. Our programs also work within kindergartens or childcares to engage other children and/or staff and to generalise skills into different settings.

We prioritise a child’s happiness during their ABA experience and believe that a happy child can and will learn. Our programs are centred around the joy of learning, where each milestone achieved is celebrated and fun is an essential ingredient for skill development. In addition, resilience is actively promoted in a safe and nurturing way in order to empower the child and provide a pathway to independence and choice. When seeking to address challenges we look to the underlying cause to better understand the challenge, taking into account the right or need of the child to engage in actions or behaviours even if they might otherwise be considered unusual

### **4. What is the role of an Early Childhood Clinical Consultant in the EIBI Program?**

Learning for Life Early Childhood Clinical Consultants are responsible for planning and designing the child’s EIBI program (including undertaking risk assessment, goal setting and devising strategies to support goals agreed upon) as well as overseeing Therapy Assistants’ implementation of the program. While Therapy Assistants deliver the day to day therapy sessions throughout the week, the Early Childhood Clinical Consultant is the key touchpoint for parents/guardians about the child’s progress, leads the fortnightly team clinic meetings, conducts observations of the child (as necessary to assist in program development and goal setting), works with the parents/guardians to set learning goals and is available for parent/guardian questions and/or consultation as necessary in between clinic meetings.

Our Early Childhood Clinical Consultants also work proactively with a child’s broader support network, whether that be the child’s kindergarten teacher, paediatrician other allied health professional.

### **5. What qualifications do your Early Childhood Clinical Consultants have?**

Each of our Early Childhood Clinical Consultants have relevant undergraduate degrees and at least four years ABA experience working with young children with ASD. Some of our Early Childhood Clinical Consultants have also undertaken a Masters of Applied Behavioural Analysis and/or achieved Board Certificated Behavioural Analysis status.

Each Early Childhood Clinical Consultant is supported by our Clinical Director and undergoes continual professional development and internal training and supervision.

Bios for each of our Clinical Consultants are available on the “Our Team” page on our [website](#).

## **6. What is the role of an ABA Therapy Assistant in the EIBI Program?**

Therapy Assistants work under the direction of the Early Childhood Clinical Consultants, carrying out ABA based strategies and therapy techniques, to implement a child's EIBI program. Therapy Assistants work one-to-one with the child, other than during fortnightly clinic meetings (which the entire team of Therapy Assistants, as well as the Clinical Consultant, attend) or where a second Therapy Assistant also attends a session for training purposes. Clients are not charged for the attendance of a second Learning for Life Therapy Assistant as this is an internal training cost absorbed by Learning for Life.

## **7. What qualifications do your EIBI Therapy Assistants have?**

Each Therapy Assistant undergoes the Learning for Life certified training program, involving a combination of practical (on the job) training and theory. The practical training happens during the child's therapy sessions and involves an experienced therapy assistant training the new therapy assistant while delivering the therapy session. This training program is overseen by senior Clinical Consultants. Therapy Assistant training is ongoing, and proactively supported by senior Clinical Consultants, even once a Therapy Assistant has met the criteria required to conduct therapy sessions without another staff member present. Many of our Therapy Assistants are also studying related courses (such as psychology, speech pathology or occupational therapy) while working as a Therapy Assistant.

Each EIBI Full Service Model client is allocated a therapy team comprising a mix of Therapy Assistants with differing levels of experience.

## **8. Is there a minimum weekly number of hours of therapy required for your EIBI program?**

Frequency of therapy is determined on a case by case basis and very much depends on the individual child's needs and goals. Learning for Life recommends that families work with the Clinical Consultant to deliver as close to 36 hours as possible in order to provide the child with the opportunity to gain the maximum benefit, however, many factors will impact whether this is practical or appropriate for the child.

When a child first commences the EIBI program the frequency of sessions will be lower and gradually increase over time. Likewise, as a child is completing the program, the frequency of sessions will gradually decrease to allow for a smooth transition.

## **9. Can my child access other therapies at the same time as the EIBI program?**

It is important that families make themselves aware of other relevant supports and therapies available for children with ASD when considering whether to enrol in the EIBI program. Paediatricians should also be able to advise you about other therapies and the Autism section of the [Raising Children Parenting Website](#) is a great source of information.

Learning for Life believes in a holistic approach to support provision and respects parent choice as to what supports are right for their child. In some cases, Clinical Consultants may recommend other therapies be run in conjunction with therapy such as Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy and opportunities for supported socialisation (such as playgroup or kindergarten). Unless otherwise recommended by your Clinical Consultant, we would expect such therapies and programs to be an addition to and compliment the therapy hours conducted with Learning for Life.

If a client is considering biomedical treatments for your child we ask that they consult with their Clinical Consultant first as such treatment can impact the progress and validity of our program.

## **10. Where does therapy take place?**

Learning for Life offers a home and community-based service, whereby therapy sessions may be carried out in the child's home, kinder, childcare or even grandparent's house. While we do not

offer centre-based service as a standard practice, we can accommodate some sessions in our centre located in Kew. Once a month the team clinic meeting is held in our centre in Kew.

### **11. When do sessions run?**

Therapy sessions run Monday through to Saturday. Therapy sessions are usually 3 hours in length and may be scheduled as afternoon or morning sessions (or both) between the hours of 8am and 5pm. Although timetabling may vary from child to child (including accommodating children who still have day time naps), there is limited flexibility in when each child's hours are delivered due to staff commitments at other client sessions and meetings.

### **12. What do therapy sessions and team clinic meetings involve?**

Therapy sessions are usually run in 3 hour blocks with the Therapy Assistant completing session specific administration (such as prior session notes review, data recording and team notes) for the first 15 minutes and last 15 minutes of each session. Within the session the Therapy Assistant will teach specific skills (as directed by the supervising Clinical Consultant pursuant to the plan and goals agreed with the child's parents/guardians) by breaking down the skill into its most simple step by step form and at a pace appropriate to the individual child. This is done in the form of play with a focus on fun, positive reinforcement and celebration of achievement, not matter how small. While a 3 hour therapy sessions may sound like a long time for a young child to be doing therapy, they are spending this time playing with the full attention and engagement of an adult. Play incorporates games, activities, themes and toys that the child is interested in, and short breaks (as well as access to snacks) are included as needed by the child.

As and when appropriate, some therapy sessions may incorporate "community outings" in order to generalise skills learnt into the child's community and wider environment. This might involve a Therapy Assistant taking a child for a walk around the block, to the local playground or even into a local shop. Community outings only take place as relevant to the achievement of specific goals within a child's program, in accordance with a risk management plan and with the consent of the parents/guardians.

Fortnightly team clinic meetings are scheduled for 2 hours with all team members, parents/guardians and the child present. During this time the supervising Clinical Consultant will observe the child and other team members in play to assist in assessing progress being made, consult with the parents/guardians and to assess whether any plan adjustment or goal setting is required and provide advice and strategies relating to day to day support of the child. At the end of the formal meeting one of the Therapy Assistants will conduct an additional hour of therapy and the supervising Clinical Consultant will prepare a clinic report to share with all parties. The location of Clinic meetings alternates each fortnight between the family home and the centre.

There may be some occasions where the Clinical Consultant replaces the fortnightly clinic meeting with 2 hours of assessment and check-in in an alternative format if this is clinically more appropriate in the circumstances at that time. For example, the Clinical Consultant may instead attend to observe one of the usual scheduled therapy sessions for 30 minutes, attend a therapy session conducted at kinder for an hour and then have a 30 minute video call with the parents. Any such change would be advised to parents/guardians in advance, with the ultimate purpose still to ensure progress is assessed, parents are consulted and any required program adjustments can be made, and the 2 hour fortnightly clinic meeting fees would still apply.

### **13. What areas do you service?**

We provide service throughout greater Melbourne and, for families enrolling in the consultancy model, across Victoria. Some areas are more difficult to staff Therapy Assistants in and this may impact ability for us to take on new families in certain locations from time to time.

#### **14. Do you offer centre-based services?**

While we can run some sessions from our centre, we are not a centre-based service and do not offer full programs in the centre on a permanent basis.

#### **15. Where is your office located?**

Our office is located at [25-27 High Street South, Kew, Victoria 3101](#), between Kew Junction and Barkers Rd. There is on and off-street parking available and the number 48 and number 109 trams run directly past the centre.

#### **16. How long is your waitlist for service?**

We keep a register of families who enquire about service and submit an Expression of Interest form. When capacity opens up to take on a new family, assessment is made against the Expression of Interest Register, taking into account our principles for priority of access. As priority of access is determined on a combination of factors it is very difficult to provide an indication of wait times. For this reason, we recommend that families continue to investigate other services even after submitting an Expression of Interest form.

#### **17. Who is eligible to access the EIBI program?**

Enrolment in Learning for Life's EIBI services is open to children who:

- (a) have a diagnosis (or provisional diagnosis) of Autism Spectrum Disorder;
- (b) are under the age of 6; and
- (c) have not yet commenced primary school (whether in mainstream primary school or a specialist primary school).

Parents/guardians of eligible children may submit an Expression of Interest Form to register interest in our service, but access and enrolment will depend on our capacity at the time. If a child turns 6 or commences primary school before accessing service they will be removed from the Expression of Interest Register as they will no longer meet criteria for access.

Once enrolled, a child may continue in the EIBI program until the age 7 years old, however once the child commences primary school the program will involve the reduction and transition away from Learning for Life delivered ABA therapy sessions and become limited to fortnightly Clinical Consultant consultation and scheduled school observations.

#### **18. What Assessments is my child required to have to participate in the EIBI Program?**

Specific pre-program tests are required before a child can commence our Full Service EIBI program. These tests may include the Childhood Rating Scale (**CARS**), the Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scale (1984) (**VABS**), the Bayley Scales of Infant Development – II (1993) (**BSID-II**) and the Reynell Developmental Language Scale (1990) (**RDLS**).

During (but no more than annually) and shortly prior to completion of the program tests such as the following may also be administered on a child: Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scales of Intelligence (1992), VABS, BDID-II and RDLS.

These tests assist in determining appropriate program design and ensure the therapy being conducted is of benefit to the child.

Although Learning for Life does not conduct these assessments for EIBI clients, where families undertake the assessments with Learning for Life's assessment organisation of choice (and within the timeframes required by the program) Learning for Life will cover the cost of the assessments. If a family prefers to access an alternative assessment organisation the assessments will be at the family's own cost.

While EIBI Consultancy clients may choose to undertake assessments in order to support program design and formally measure development gains, Learning for Life does cover the cost

of assessments in the consultancy program. If you are considering our consultancy model and have further questions about whether specific assessments are warranted, please ask us.

In addition to the above assessments, our Clinical Consultants conduct Verbal Behaviour Milestones & Placement Program (**VB-MAPP**) assessments as part of full service EIBI program design and delivery. The VB-MAPP assessment is a comprehensive assessment and skill tracking tool for pre-school children to allow Clinical Consultants to assess a child’s behavioural development and identify where additional support and focus should be directed. VB-MAPP assessments are conducted at various points throughout the program with the cost embedded within the program.

**19. What are the EIBI fees?**

Service	Full Service Model Fees	Consultancy Fees
Regular ABA Therapy Sessions	\$86.79 per hour	N/A as families recruit and pay for their own Therapy Assistants
Fortnightly Team Clinic Meetings	\$193.99 per hour (\$387.98 per two hour meeting)	\$193.99 per hour (\$387.98 per two hour meeting)
Clinical Consultant observations and additional consultations	Free of Charge	\$193.99 per hour
Annual NDIS/Progress Report	\$193.99 per hour (Capped at \$387.98 per report)	\$193.99 per hour (Capped at \$387.98 per report)
Late notice cancellation fee	\$100	\$100

For children who have commenced primary school and transitioned out of Learning for Life Therapy Assistant run sessions but continue service with their Clinical Consultant, Clinical Consultant time will be charged at \$193.99 thereafter (whether it be for consultation, conducting observations, reporting writing etc).

Fees are invoiced weekly via email and payment is required within 7 days of the date of invoice.

**20. Do we have to pay extra for your staff to travel to our home?**

We do not charge for travel time for locations within 50kms from the Centre. Travel beyond 50km is charged at \$193.99 per hour for Clinical Consultants and \$87.69 per hour for Therapy Assistants.

**21. Can I use NDIS funding towards the cost of your EIBI program?**

Yes - If your child has a self-managed or plan-managed NDIS plan with funding available under the Capacity Building – Improved Daily Living category whereby the nature of supports within this category are either not specified or refer to any of:

- early intervention therapy;
- Applied behavioural Analysis or ABA;
- other therapy (or therapy generally); or
- supports provided by an allied health assistant or therapy assistant.

At this stage Learning for Life is not a registered NDIS provider and therefore cannot service clients on an agency-managed NDIS plan. We are currently going through the registration process through, and once registered, will be able to support agency managed clients.

**22. Our NDIS plan does not cover the full cost of the program, can we still access the program?**

Yes – although NDIS funding can be used to cover the cost of our EIBI programs, NDIS funding it not a prerequisite to accessing service. Given Learning for Life is not currently registered with the NDIS, clients are directly responsible for paying service fees themselves and then clients with NDIS funding are responsible for claiming fees back from the NDIS to the extent

applicable. Where funding allocated in a client's NDIS plan is insufficient to meet the clinically recommended hours of therapy, and the client is not in financial position to meet the shortfall, the client may be eligible for a fee subsidy under the Learning for Life Fair Access Subsidy Program.

### **23. We don't have an NDIS plan, can we still access the program?**

Yes – as noted above, although NDIS funding can be used to cover the cost of our EIBI programs, NDIS funding is not a prerequisite to accessing our services. Clients are responsible for paying service fees directly regardless of how they fund it. Clients who are ineligible for NDIS funding (e.g. due to VISA status) or who are waiting on their first NDIS plan, and are not in a financial position to cover the full cost of service, may be eligible to apply for fee support via the Fair Access Subsidy Program.

### **24. What is the Fair Access Subsidy Program?**

Learning for Life is a not for profit organisation with a mission to provide the highest standard of ABA-based services to help children with ASD and their families reach their full potential, regardless of their financial circumstances. To support this mission, Learning for Life actively fundraises towards a Fair Access Subsidy Program, to assist families in need with the cost of service. Families who do not have NDIS funding, or who have NDIS funding which is not sufficient to meet clinically recommended ABA therapy hours, may be eligible for fee subsidies if they are not in a financial position to cover the cost of service. Application for the Fair Access Subsidy Program is via application form and open to clients of Learning for Life (but submission of an application does not guarantee provision of fee subsidies).

### **25. Do you have child safe practices?**

Yes – Learning for Life is a child safe organisation and is committed to the protection and well-being of children and young people. Our Child Safe and Vulnerable Person Policy is available for viewing on our [website](#).

Learning for Life has strict recruitment and screening practices, including the requirement for all staff to have valid and up to date Working with Children Checks and National Police Checks. All new staff also undertake child safety training as part of their onboarding process and sign specific acknowledgement of our Staff Code of Conduct (noting that our Code of Conduct Policy is also available for viewing on our [website](#)).

In addition, Learning for Life implements a Child Safe Risk Management Plan for each family enrolled in the full service EIBI program.

Our Practice Manager, Celeste Sullivan, is the Learning for Life Child Safe Officer.

### **26. What are your practices for protecting our privacy?**

Our Client Confidentiality & Privacy Policy is available for viewing on our [website](#). As outlined in our policy, we will only use the information provided to us by clients for the purpose it is collected and ensure our information storage systems are secured appropriately. In addition to the requirement for staff to follow privacy protocols in our policy, each staff member signs a Confidentiality Deed as part of their employment contract.

Our General Manager-Operations, Victoria Crane, is the Learning for Life Privacy Officer.

### **27. How can I give feedback or make a complaint?**

Our Client Complaints & Feedback Policy is available for viewing on our [website](#). Feedback or complaints can be made in a number of ways, including:

- anonymously via our [online feedback form](#);
- via mail, email or verbally to our Practice Manager at PO Box 7118 Hawthorn North VIC 3122 or [timetables@learningforlife.com.au](mailto:timetables@learningforlife.com.au) or 0448 127 508

- via email or verbally to our CEO, Clinical Director, General Manager-Operations or your allocated Clinical Consultant.

**28. I have read your FAQs and still have questions. How can I get these answered?**

Please email [enquiries@learningforlife.com.au](mailto:enquiries@learningforlife.com.au) if you have any remaining questions or would like a Learning for Life staff member to call you to discuss further.

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