

# EFFECTIVE USE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKERS AND SCHOOL SERVICES OFFICERS



Early childhood workers (ECWs) and school services officers (SSOs) work directly with teachers in preschools and schools to support learners.

They focus on learner skill development and increasing independence. They can also support the access, engagement, skill development and inclusion of learners with additional needs. This helps learners to experience success in the relevant curriculum framework.

ECWs and SSOs are also known as support workers.

## Types of support workers

ECWs typically work with preschool learners in a preschool setting. SSOs typically work with primary and high school learners in school settings.

## How to use ECWs and SSOs effectively

Support workers can be valuable resources in preschools and schools if used effectively. Support from an ECW or SSO can be:

- short or long term
- with an individual learner, a small group or the whole group
- across a range of environments
- before, after or during learning time, during breaks or at times of transition.

To make the best use of support workers and achieve the best outcomes for learners, teachers will need to establish strong collaborative working relationships. Teachers are responsible for managing the design of learning and must provide clear direction about learning goals and ongoing professional dialogue and feedback to guide the support worker's practice.

The support worker's deeper understanding of approaches to learning will help them better facilitate learner skill development.

To achieve the best academic outcomes and support learner wellbeing, support must be intentionally planned in collaboration with the teacher, the support worker, the learner and other stakeholders. The aim of support should be to increase independence and maximise the amount of time the learner spends with their same age peers.



**Government  
of South Australia**

Department for Education

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## Leader's role – employing and managing support workers

Leaders need to have a clear vision and purpose for support workers and:

- match support workers and their skills to the role and learner requirements
- encourage collaboration
- monitor the level of direction provided
- match professional learning opportunities to learner needs and offer these to support workers
- provide time for teachers and support workers to build relationships and collaborate
- communicate professional boundaries
- maintain the duty of care of staff and learners.



## Teacher's role – planning and working with support workers

Teachers need to prioritise the time for collaboration and relationship building to:

- clearly identify learner needs
- plan and provide the learning program to address those needs
- be clear about the learning intentions and success criteria of the learning program
- make sure support workers understand their roles and responsibilities
- determine methods for ongoing communication, feedback and reporting
- manage the deployment and duties of support workers in the learning environment
- be the point of contact with families or carers
- provide appropriate and essential information about learners and relevant plans and procedures
- maintain duty of care and line of sight.



## Support worker's role – deliver the program

Support workers can assist the growth and independence of learners by:

- delivering targeted and intentional learning programs and adjustments
- providing the appropriate level of prompts and support
- collaborating with the teacher
- asking questions and seeking clarification
- collecting and sharing data about the learning
- providing targeted feedback to learners and teachers.