

FACT SHEET

Inclusion barriers in OSHC



All children have the right to experience belonging, being, and becoming within inclusive OSHC (Outside of School Hours Care) environments. Services should support children of all abilities, cultures, and backgrounds to participate fully.

While frameworks such as My Time, Our Place provide guidance for inclusive practice, various barriers can still impact the extent to which this is achieved in everyday care settings.

Common barriers to inclusion in OSHC

- **Physical environment** – Inaccessible buildings, playgrounds, or facilities can limit participation; lack of adaptive equipment and limited space can restrict children's ability to engage fully.
- **Educator knowledge and training** – Limited understanding of inclusive practices and low confidence in supporting children with additional needs; insufficient access to professional development.
- **Attitudes and bias** – Unconscious bias, stereotypes, and low expectations of children; resistance to inclusive practices or change.
- **Communication challenges** – Language barriers for children and families; limited use of visual supports or alternative communication methods; lack of culturally responsive communication.
- **Resource constraints** – Limited funding and staffing levels; high child-to-educator ratios; time pressures that reduce opportunities for individualised support.

Inclusive features and practical strategies

- **Visual supports and routines** – Use visual schedules, signage, and supports that can be temporarily displayed to promote understanding and predictability, even in shared spaces.
- **Multicultural and inclusive resources** – Provide books, games, and images that reflect diverse cultures, identities, and experiences to support a sense of belonging.
- **Accessible and flexible environments** – Include adaptive equipment, flexible seating options (e.g. cushions, chairs, standing spaces), and create spaces that support a range of physical and developmental needs.
- **Emotional regulation spaces** – Set up a calm-down corner or quiet area to support children's self-regulation and wellbeing.
- **Portable and organised resources** – Use labelled tubs and portable storage to enable efficient setup and pack-away while maintaining access to inclusive materials.



- **Intentional planning and group structure** – Plan small-group experiences, particularly during busy times, to better support individual needs and engagement.
- **Consistency in shared spaces** – Establish predictable routines and familiar practices to reduce uncertainty in temporary environments.
- **Family communication and collaboration** – Build strong partnerships with families to ensure continuity of care and better understanding of each child's needs."

Set-up and pack-away OSHC environments (POP/PIUT)

In many OSHC services, particularly those operating in shared spaces such as schools or community centres, educators are required to set up and pack away the environment each day. This means that resources, equipment, and activity areas are temporary rather than permanently available. While this flexible model allows services to operate in a variety of locations, it can present challenges for inclusion.

Main inclusion barriers in set-up and pack-away services

- **Inconsistent environments** – Children may struggle with changing layouts and lack of routine, particularly those with additional needs.
- **Limited accessibility** – Difficulty setting up specialised or adaptive equipment each session.
- **Time constraints** – Reduced time for intentional planning due to set-up and pack-away requirements.
- **Restricted resources** – Not all materials can be transported or used every day.
- **Sensory challenges** – Shared spaces (e.g. halls) can be noisy, busy, or overwhelming.
- **Lack of ownership of space** – Children may feel less sense of belonging in temporary environments.
- **Storage limitations** – Impacts the variety and availability of inclusive resources.

Inclusive features and practical strategies for set-up and pack-away services

- **Defined and adaptable learning zones** – Create clearly marked areas that can be quickly set up and packed away to support structure and engagement across different types of play and learning.
- **Quiet/Sensory space** – Soft furnishings such as cushions and mats, along with sensory tools like stress balls, fidget spinners, sensory bottles, textured toys, weighted lap pads, and noise-reducing headphones to support regulation and reduce overstimulation.
- **Creative expression area** – Flexible, open-ended materials such as drawing supplies, playdough, recycled craft items, building blocks, collage materials, fabric scraps, and natural loose parts that encourage creativity and can be easily stored and rotated daily.
- **Active play zone** – Modular and adaptable equipment such as soft balls, beanbags, skipping ropes, cones, tunnels, balance beams, hoops, and adjustable obstacle course pieces that support a range of physical abilities and allow for varied movement experiences.
- **Social interaction space** – Simple group-based resources such as board games, card games, puzzles, team-building activities, storytelling prompts, and collaborative building sets that encourage peer connection and inclusion.
- **Efficient environmental design** – Arrange spaces to allow for quick transitions between activities, reducing disruption caused by set-up and pack-away requirements.
- **Child involvement in environment set-up** – Encourage children to assist in setting up and packing away spaces to build ownership, responsibility, and a sense of belonging.
- **Flexible use of shared spaces** – Design layouts that can be easily adjusted to suit different group sizes, abilities, and daily program needs.
- **Resource rotation systems** – Regularly rotate activities and materials to maintain engagement while managing limited storage and transport capacity.
- **Minimising sensory overload** – Consider positioning of activities and groupings to reduce noise and congestion in shared environments.