

OUR TEAM

Hannah Waddington, PhD

Lecturer and certified ESDM therapist

Larah van der Meer, PhD

Lecturer and certified ESDM therapist

Jeff Sigafos, PhD

Professor School of Education

Jessica Tupou, PhD student

Researching ESDM in early childhood centres

Sally Curtis, Masters student

Research Assistant

Lauren van Noorden, Masters student

Research Assistant

Willow Sainsbury, MEdPsych

Intern Educational Psychologist

FUNDING

This project has been funded by:



CONTACT

Hannah Waddington

Lecturer

School of Education
Victoria University of Wellington
Room 211, 15 Waiteata Rd, Block C
PO Box 600, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

+64-4-463 9773

✉ hannah.waddington@vuw.ac.nz

ESDM Therapy
for young children
with autism

ESDM THERAPY FOR YOUNG CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

Are you looking for support for your child with autism?

Our team at the School of Education at Victoria University of Wellington is offering an early intervention programme for young children with autism (0–5 years), alongside research to assess the effectiveness of the programme.

What does the therapy involve?

We use an evidence-based therapy called the Early Start Denver Model (ESDM), which shows huge promise in the support of children with autism. Specifically developed for young children with autism, it includes three core elements:

- *Naturalistic* – learning is embedded into naturally occurring routines and activities and as much as possible occurs in the child's natural setting. Skills are taught through play-based routines
- *Developmental* – teaching is based on a developmental model in which skills such as communication, social interaction, imitation, and imaginary play are taught in the sequence in which they typically develop. Focus is given to relationship building and motivating children to engage socially and play with a partner in order to teach these skills
- *Behavioural* – teaching incorporates the well-validated teaching practices of Applied Behaviour Analysis. This includes providing clear opportunities for learning skills, prompting and reinforcing responses.



ESDM therapy aims to reduce the symptoms of autism, with a focus on teaching communication and social interaction, and targets all developmental areas. It “seeks to empower children with ASD to become active participants in the world, initiating interactions with other people” (ESDM Manual, p. xi).

Services provided

- 1–1 ESDM therapy by a certified ESDM therapist
- Parent coaching in ESDM
- Termly ESDM playgroups
- Termly workshops for parents with practical strategies

Referrals

We accept referrals from parents, early childhood centres and professionals.

Preference will be given to children who are on waitlists or in the process of receiving an autism diagnosis and children who are diagnosed but on waitlists for receiving services.

Cost

A subsidised recommended donation will be requested.

Research

This project has been established together with the Autism Intervention Trust to develop and evaluate best practice early interventions for young children with autism in New Zealand.

The services we offer will be part of various research projects for which we will obtain informed consent.

