



“My passion is at the front line, working with people. I’ve made that decision, that’s where I want to be.” – Tina Beattie (Early Intervention Teacher, Blenheim)

Very few adults can even begin to understand the way four year old Kose makes sense of the world.

Kose is a child with severe Autism who’s been attending his local early childhood education centre for the past 12 months.

Kose’s parents didn’t know much about Autism prior to his birth. All that changed, however, after early childhood education staff observed he was learning differently to his peers and suggested he get assessed by health and education specialists.

Kose was lacking in motivation and interest in the things around him. He finds it difficult to make eye contact, has limited language and a poor understanding of social skills.

With the help of an early intervention teacher from the Ministry of Education, Kose’s parents and teachers now have a much greater understanding of Autism. She linked them to Autism New Zealand, a wide range of teaching and learning resources and got them all involved in a professional development programme focused on supporting children like Kose.

An intervention plan was developed with Kose’s family, his early childhood educators and Special Education’s early intervention team. This plan included professional development for the team around Kose, including his family, and appropriate teaching strategies.

The team around Kose have increased their knowledge and skills, which has meant their teaching practice is more effective for Kose. He has made significant gains with eye contact, communication and attention to tasks he needs to learn and develop.

Nature of the work.

Early intervention teachers work closely with parents/ caregivers, head teachers and other specialists to help children with special education needs learn and develop.

It’s an important role in helping children with special education needs (and their families) prepare for and start and settle into school.

Early intervention teachers assess and observe children who are referred to the Ministry of Education by teachers, parents or health specialists. They talk to the adults in the child's life and observe the child's overall development and behaviour to find out what their needs are.

This process can occur at the child's home or in an early childhood education setting, wherever is most appropriate.

"We're working with mum to help her manage Anna's seizures at home. We've accessed information and resources and I've referred her to Epilepsy New Zealand who'll provide home visits and extra help." – Tina Beattie (Early Intervention Teacher, Blenheim)

As an early intervention teacher, you'll adapt the way you work to suit the individual needs of a child and tailor your approaches to suit the context in which a child lives and learns.

If necessary, early intervention teachers work with colleagues and other agencies for extra support with behaviour, communication, hearing and other special education needs, so early intervention teachers develop close working relationships with a range of education, health and community professionals.

"Effective relationships are vital to doing a good job. Often parents aren't aware of their child's special education needs. So, it's up to us to get things started and to get a child on the pathway to success." – Tina Beattie (Early Intervention Teacher, Blenheim)

Preparing early intervention programmes and providing them to a child's support team for feedback and ideas are also central to an early intervention teacher's role.

Programme strategies will be implemented by a child and his or her support team. The team works together to monitor, review and adapt the programme.

"Being a team player in this role is vital. The strength of what we do is using a team approach." – Sue Thomas (Early Intervention Teacher, Takapuna)

The early intervention programme becomes part of a child's individual education plan (a plan can be made up of several programmes tailored for each child's needs).

As an early intervention teacher you'll have the opportunity to share your knowledge and experience by developing programmes and providing training to early childhood education services and community groups.

It's a role with a lot of variety and every day can bring someone, or something new.



Early intervention teaching is not just a job – it's a profession with countless possibilities.

Who are we?

The Ministry has offices located throughout New Zealand where we aim to provide access to education and learning for all New Zealand's children.

You'll help people see that children with special education needs are more than just their disability and with the right support, can participate, learn, achieve and contribute.

"You have to want what's best for children in all aspects of their lives. If there's one thing I've learned about this job, the more you put into it, the more you'll get out of it." – Sue Thomas (Early Intervention Teacher, Takapuna)

Still at school or studying at university? In a related career but feel like a change? Regardless of your situation, now is a good time to think about early intervention career opportunities with the Ministry of Education.

Where can I go in my career?

Becoming an early intervention teacher with the Ministry of Education will give you the rewards and challenges of the job itself, as well as opportunities to develop your career.

You'll be supported and supervised by experienced professionals within the Ministry. Keeping up to date with the latest research evidence, taking part in ongoing training and mixing with a wide range of high skilled and talented professionals, will keep you challenged and stimulated.

Fixed term, practice focused leadership roles give you the chance to lead change and improve services from within the organisation.

Meet Sue Thomas, an *Early Intervention Teacher* in Takapuna



9AM TUESDAY MORNING: Sue starts the day visiting a student.

“Every time I help a child move successfully from early childhood to school is a highlight,” says Sue.

HER BACKGROUND: Sue Thomas can trace the start of her special education career to the year she began primary teaching.

Primary teaching quickly led to more study and several years teaching in the early childhood education sector. Eventually, while her children were small, she decided to pursue a long-term interest in special education.

Today, she’s an Early Intervention Teacher with the Ministry of Education in Takapuna in Auckland’s north-west.

“I really love what I do. I’m a practitioner and always will be. I’ve built on my experience and taken all the learning opportunities that have come my way. I have developed a great career that I enjoy every day.”

HER STORY: Having the opportunity to keep learning is one thing Sue Thomas likes most about being an Early Intervention Teacher.

She should know. As an Early Intervention Teacher, Sue has added to her teaching diplomas with a Diploma in Early Intervention and a Bachelor’s Degree in Education – as well as taken up a range of professional development opportunities.

She’s trained in behaviour management, in traumatic incident management and in supporting the education success of Māori and Pasifika learners.

Autism has also been a focus of her training, through professional development courses on the Picture Exchange Communication System and the Relationship Development Intervention model.

On top of those, Sue has provided and received supervision and participated in projects, as a lead practitioner, that aim to improve the Ministry’s early intervention, behaviour, communication and high and complex needs services.

Right now, she’s part of a committee organising an international conference looking at assessment practice.

THE REWARDS AND CHALLENGES: “Every time I help a child move successfully from early childhood education to school is a highlight,” says Sue.

“For me, that means settling a child into the classroom, ensuring the teacher feels confident to teach and access further information and support if they need it. It means the teacher feeling thoroughly informed about the child’s needs and the family feeling it’s not a huge deal to take their child to school each day.”

On the other hand, says Sue, the paper work can be a challenge, and it’s easy to over do it, particularly with long distances to travel.

Yet, she says, with the right experience and training behind you, it can be an incredibly rewarding career.

HER FUTURE ASPIRATIONS: Looking ahead, Sue is more than happy to keep building on her existing knowledge and experience as a practitioner – especially while she still feels so passionate about what she does.

Want to speak to someone like Sue about a career in early intervention teaching? Give us a call or drop us an email.

Other career opportunities include management, getting involved in special projects and offering supervision.

What skills and knowledge do early intervention teachers have?

- ▶ knowledge of normal and delayed child development
- ▶ knowledge of early childhood education
- ▶ skill in managing special education needs in a variety of settings
- ▶ knowledge of psychology and education theory and child development
- ▶ knowledge of community and family support services
- ▶ excellent communication, teaching, research, planning and administration skills.

What qualifications and experience do I need?

You need an early childhood education teaching degree or diploma, teaching experience and a Diploma of Early Intervention (or you must be studying towards one).

The University of Auckland offers a [Graduate Diploma in Special Education](#) (Early Intervention) and Canterbury University offers a [Postgraduate Diploma of Health Sciences](#) (Early Intervention). Entrance requires a relevant undergraduate degree and teaching experience.

You may be eligible for a Ministry [study award](#).

Research and plan for your career by checking out the [Career Services website](#).

What salary can I expect?

Salaries for early intervention teachers vary between \$40,000 and \$74,000 per year, depending on skill and experience.

What about my personal qualities?

You'll spend lots of time with people from a range of ages, cultures, backgrounds and lifestyles. So, you will need to listen, build trust and inspire confidence.

Being understanding, patient, supportive, creative and practical are all great personal qualities for an early intervention teacher.

Having a strong interest in team work and collaborating with other professionals is important.

What are the working conditions and benefits?

The Ministry of Education offers five weeks' annual leave and flexible working conditions, so you can balance work with child care, travel and training commitments.

"The flexibility is great. I plan my day myself. I'm accountable and responsible for my work. I steer my own ship." – Tina Beattie (Early Intervention Teacher, Blenheim)

Ready to go? Now's a great time to start a rewarding and dynamic career in early intervention teaching.

Who can I speak to?

Speak to an early intervention teacher or contact the Ministry on:

- ▶ 0800 622 222
- ▶ special.education@minedu.govt.nz

Where can I find out more?

Special education careers, professional development, scholarships and study awards

- ▶ www.minedu.govt.nz/educationsectors/SpecialEducation.aspx
- ▶ www.minedu.govt.nz/sestudyawards

Early Intervention Association of New Zealand

- ▶ www.earlyinterventionassociation.org.nz

Careers information

- ▶ www.careers.govt.nz
- ▶ www.teachnz.govt.nz

Studying Early Education

- ▶ www.tki.org.nz/e/tki/ed_agencies/tertiary_inst.php