



“I really love what I do... I have developed a great career that I enjoy every day.” – Sue Thomas (Early Intervention Teacher, Blenheim)

At first glance, two year old Anna is as precious and as fragile as a china doll.

But looks can be deceiving, say her parents. This youngster is just as determined, precocious and keen to learn as any other child her age.

Anna has a very rare condition known as Wolf Hirschhorn Syndrome, giving her a range of high and very high special education needs.

She can't speak, has delayed development, regular seizures and, owing to her very low immune system, must take care not to get ill when she's around others.

All the same, Anna is participating in home-based early childhood education and has proudly learned to walk this year.

Shortly, her mum will become Anna's early childhood education teacher with support from a committed team of Ministry of Education, The Correspondence School and health specialists.

Anna's key worker, a Ministry of Education early intervention teacher, says early intervention and great team work have been some of the keys to Anna's success. And let's not forget Anna's plucky attitude.

Nature of 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 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 each child's 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 help with 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.

Who are we?

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



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

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 highly 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.

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

Meet Tina Beattie, an *Early Intervention Teacher* in Blenheim



9AM TUESDAY MORNING: Tina starts the day visiting one of her student's at their home.

“I get a lot of enjoyment from my career. I enjoy the challenge of it. It's very stimulating and rewarding. I don't want to be anything else... My passion is here.”

HER BACKGROUND: Tina Beattie is a full-time Early Intervention Teacher with the Ministry of Education.

Starting off with a Bachelor of Teaching, she later added a Diploma of Early Intervention, which she gained from the University of Auckland.

Before joining the Ministry as an Early Intervention Teacher she worked in the early childhood education sector as a teacher, as a Playcentre supervisor and as a special education needs coordinator.

HER STORY: Get in early! – That's Early Intervention Teacher Tina Beattie's catch cry.

Tina says experience and research evidence show that children and young people with special education needs who are diagnosed and get help early, do best.

That's why working effectively with the range of people and organisations that make up the health and education sectors is a top priority, she says.

“I have strong relationships with everyone from GPs, speech-language therapists and occupational therapists through to school teachers and representatives from organisations like Epilepsy New Zealand.”

Tina says she and her education and health sector colleagues regularly meet, share knowledge and strive to work as collaboratively as possible.

“It means I'm able to get in early – as soon as someone within that wider network has contact with a child and refers them on.”

THE REWARDS AND CHALLENGES: Tina says ongoing professional development is one of the major highlights of her career to date.

“I have a passion for learning and can see how powerful bringing knowledge into my early intervention work with children and their families can be.”

A couple of years ago, she followed her interest in behaviour by training to become a facilitator for a parenting programme called the Incredible Years.

“It's such a wonderful programme. I really believe in it. It's evidence-based and it works. It's parent driven. Parents support parents, they come up with their own solutions and generate their own growth,” she says.

The big challenge of the job, says Tina, lies in the distances she travels to get to the 25 children on her caseload – her region stretches all the way from Picton in the north (of the South Island) to Kaikoura in the east.

HER FUTURE ASPIRATIONS: Tina's ambition for the future is simple: to keep doing what she's doing and do it well.

“I get a lot of enjoyment from my career. I enjoy the challenge of it. It's very stimulating and rewarding. I don't want to be anything else. My passion is here.”

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

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