Franklin Early Childhood School in Canberra is a hub for co-located early childhood education and care and school education.

Franklin Early Childhood School is a new centre built by the ACT Government which opened in 2012. The site incorporates a kindergarten to Year 2 school, preschool and long day care and outside school hours care services.

The long day care service run by Anglicare incorporates 174 places. Centre Director, Vivienne Gould, says that the idea of the centre is to provide a community for families.

‘The model is in order to provide flexibility for families to provide a hub where we not only provide childcare and school, but there’s a community environment, there are support services for families, there’s a whole lot of other stuff that can happen,’ Vivienne says.

One of the main benefits for families is the flexibility of providing a single point of drop off for families.

‘So we have quite a few families where they’ve got a child in the nursery, a child going to preschool and someone in Year 2. So they are accessing everything that we’re offering. We have families then who will only be accessing the preschool and after-school care, and then are going to Mother Teresa or Bergman, or the private schools around. We have a huge range, very diverse.’

While the long day care centre is open from 7.30 am to 6.00 pm, the preschool only operates from 9.00 am until 3.00 pm. This means children can transition between the preschool and the long day care service during the day.

‘So some families will come full time, they will utilise before and after preschool, as well as the long days on the opposite days. Some families may only come for one afternoon session a fortnight, depending on their work arrangements. It’s very flexible.’

Children that attend the preschool and long day care service are placed in an integrated preschool room so that they interact with the same children.

Vivienne says that one of the benefits for children is the transition to school.

‘The students are familiar, so they start with us and they’re familiar with the layout and the staff, they see their teachers. So it’s an easy transition to go from one to the other,’ Vivienne says.

Integrating all of the services was initially a challenge despite co-location in the building. The services worked together collaboratively to ensure that the space was being utilised effectively based on demand from families. The key was communication. Regular meetings are held with the school principal and the community coordinator to ensure the centre was meeting the evolving needs of families accessing the hub.

The preschool and the long day care centre also regularly communicate with each other about programming for children under the Early Years Learning Framework to ensure there are consistent and complimentary approaches to children’s learning based on children’s interests.

The service does find it a challenge to attract and retain staff, but the ability to employ staff across the out of school hours care services and the long day care services makes it easier in offering staff flexible hours.
Anglicare is now looking at adopting a similar co-located preschool/long day care model with a private school in Googong in Southern NSW.

**Tips**

- Look at opportunities to co-locate services with schools and other community services.
- Look closely at the physical design and environment and ensure that these spaces can be used flexibly by different services.
- Establish regular communication channels with services involved in the integrated model both at the management level and in programming.
- Always be on the lookout for new opportunities to strengthen collaboration with other services.

Develop clear and precise policy around aspects of flexible service delivery to embed these practices with staff.