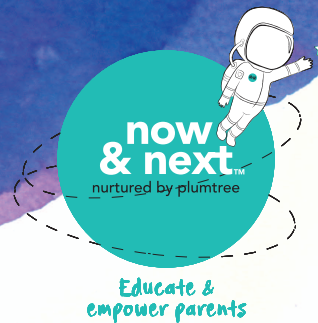


# Families leaning into partnerships with professionals

The following statement was written by and for parents of children with disabilities or delays in their development at the second Now and Next Alumni conference 2018.



When we choose to 'lean in', we understand that...

- professionals are important champions in our journeys, but they cannot replace the role that we have as families;
- we are making an active choice to become leaders for our families, our communities, and ourselves;
- to provide a good life, is to provide a good life not just for our children, but for ourselves, our families, and our communities;
- a good life might include services and systems, but goes far, far beyond them.

By 'leaning in', we become active partners with professionals and...

- accept a shared responsibility and accountability in maintaining our partnership with professionals;
- respect our professionals' expertise but understand that we, as families, are best placed to lead the team around our child;
- commit to being active recipients of professional expertise, and to being involved partners in our child's therapy;
- share with professionals the area of our expertise, which is our child;
- invest in our own education and ourselves by being active learners since we make the ultimate difference in the lives of our children;
- model for professionals an active, respectful partnership with professionals.

By 'leaning in', we accept the responsibility to...

- embrace the strengths and interests of our children and use these as a starting point so that they develop their confidence and identity as unique individuals;
- remind others and ourselves that we reject the practice of focusing on what our children cannot do. This 'deficit focus' is outdated and damaging;
- shift the perception of what professionals expect of parents, of our partnerships, and of their role within those relationships, so that we achieve change for other families with whom those professionals work;
- include our professionals in celebrating our children's strengths;
- stimulate the leadership of our families by changing professional perspectives about what families want and what they can achieve.

By 'leaning in', we embrace the knowledge that...

- we must bring other parents along with us, so that – as a collective voice – we have more impact than we could ever have individually;
- if we leave each other behind, if our professional partnerships are an individual affair, we have achieved only so much;
- together we can make social change; together we can achieve a social movement for realising a better, more inclusive, more accepting world for our children;
- achieving acceptance for our children is the core business of family leadership.