

SEN and disability in the early years

Case studies

A childminder's role in early identification and supporting parents

How a childminder can offer personalised and professional support to parents of children without a diagnosis

Submitted by Sue Fisher on behalf of a Registered childminder

Context

The childminder has been registered since 2010. She has registered to offer places to funded two-year-old children. She is part of the local childminder network and uses professional development opportunities to develop her practice. The childminder actively sought links with the local authority. The childminder offered a place to a 26 month old child after the parent had difficulties with admission to a local nursery. The parent approached the childminder after being given her details by the local authority.

As the childminder developed a relationship with the parent she became aware that the mother was a young, lone parent who was also facing housing issues and without local family or social network for support.

Building the relationship and first concerns

The childminder started to develop a strong relationship with the parent through the settling in process and demonstrated to the parent her growing knowledge and understanding of her child's interests and preferred activities, such as being in the kitchen, outside on the swings and using the blackboard. The childminder provided as many opportunities for these activities as possible. During the settling in process the childminder observed the child and noted that she seemed to be experiencing some difficulties. The childminder sensitively discussed this with the parent and the parent raised her own concerns about the child's lack of development of speech and language. As this was a shared concern the childminder and the parent then worked together on simple communication skills which were practiced during the child's time at the setting and at home.

Early identification and involving others

As the child was 26 months old the two year old progress check was completed; this highlighted difficulties in motor development and a delay of 17 months in speech, language and communication. As the childminder and parent had built up a good relationship the childminder sought permission to seek further support. This was important as the childminder had limited experience of working with disabled children and children with SEN.

The childminder spoke to the local child-minding development officer at the network crèche, where providers have a chance to exchange advice and support while children engage in a play session and develop social interactions. The crèche is also attended by a speech and language therapist (SALT). With the parent's permission, the childminder was able to have an informal discussion regarding the child's development.

Observations of the child were carried out and both professionals also identified concerns relating to speech, language and communication language (SLCN) and physical development. Working together and alongside the parent, they agreed the childminder should seek further support from other professionals.

The childminder contacted the Local Authority's Early Years Inclusion Team, who were able offer advice including strategies to support the child's development. They made visits and ensured a multi-agency approach was developed for the child and the family. They supported

the writing of a CAF and secured additional funding for the childminder.

As the childminder continued to offer the child appropriate activities and to support her development, the process of early identification continued through a specialist assessment. This led to a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder. Following the diagnosis the parent felt that her child would benefit from interaction with a greater number children. A planned transition was made to a local nursery where it was felt they could support her needs. Alongside the parent, the childminder, Inclusion team and Child-minding team provided advice and support to the new setting to ensure seamless continuity of care and support.

Benefits to the child and parent

- The parent and child were welcomed by the childminder
- The relationship between the parent and childminder enabled them to get to know the child's interests and build on these
- The childminder was able to observe the child closely and on a regular basis and adjust what she did to support the child's development
- The areas of development which were causing concern were raised sensitively with the parent and early intervention focused on key aspects of development
- Early involvement of other professionals to offer advice and guidance to the childminder who, in turn, provided appropriate opportunities for the child
- The parent felt welcome and was supported by a trusting relationship with the childminder and other professionals who were involved as necessary
- The parent felt confident in raising her concerns about her child's development and was listened to
- The parent was able to contribute to her child's learning and development through close working with the childminder
- The parent was involved and consulted at every stage and was able to make choices and decisions about her child's early years provision