

SEN and disability in the early years

Case studies

Supporting children with special educational needs in a PVI setting

The Impact of the Early Years Inclusion Fund (EYIF)
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Context

The Early Years Inclusion Funding (EYIF) for 2, 3 and 4-year-olds was introduced in July 2011. It was designed to support preschool children with a high level of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and/or disabilities in early years settings, where they did not have a Statement of SEN or, as of September 2014, an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The EYIF has enabled all pre-school children to access additional funding for SEN support regardless of the early years setting they attended. The provision described, below, is a charity based playgroup.

The practice

The setting received Early Years Inclusion Funding for three children over a period of two years. The case study considers the impact and effective use of the funding for one child who had identified global developmental delay with particular difficulties in physical development and speech, language and communication development.

The setting SENCO worked alongside the parents and a range of professionals including a physiotherapist, speech and language therapist and a Portage home visitor. Shared outcomes were identified which included: strengthening the child's core-stability and leg muscles to support the development in everyday activities such as walking; developing her speech, language and communication skills to be able to express her wants and needs; supporting her during lunch times when she had problems with reflux and choking while eating. Her parents also requested that she was given the opportunity and support to establish toilet training.

The Inclusion funding was used to buy a trampoline, which provided regular opportunities for physical development. During her two years at Playgroup, the child learnt to ride a push along scooter independently. The funding was also used to enhance staffing levels and the setting was able to offer specific activities to develop her speech and language skills. By the time the child left Playgroup she was talking in sentences. The staff were also able to offer support to help her with toilet training and support at meal times.

The child's parents were initially concerned that Playgroup would not be able to meet all of their daughter's needs. However, with the equipment and the staff support, they were able to support both her physical and educational needs. They also provided additional support for transition into school, including extra visits to the reception classroom helping to reduce her parents' concerns about her moving to a new setting. During this period of time a great deal of information was gathered and this contributed to a statutory assessment and a statement of special educational needs.

Impact

The impact of the funding has been evaluated and a full report is available on request. The following outlines some of the key findings:

Benefits to the Child

- Earlier identification of children's SEN and referral to support services for early intervention and advice to early years settings and parents.
- Children are able to stay in their own/local early years setting with additional adult support rather than having to travel to an enhanced resourced nursery.
- Evidence from review reports, evaluated Individual Education Plans (IEPs) of targets achieved, Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Baseline and Progress reports and EYFS Trackers, and reports from supporting professionals have provided information on progress made by the children.
- While they were attending preschool, assessments of children's SEN were completed systematically and over time. This resulted in improvements for many of the children. It also alerted primary schools to children's SEN prior to their school entry, facilitating their planning and resource-allocation, and enabling continued support for the children. It also enabled evidence for statutory assessment to be collected for 15 children and this led to a statement of SEN being completed prior to school entry - either to a primary or special school.
- With additional adult support, the programmes/interventions recommended by support service professionals have been implemented; the child's response to these programmes has been recorded along with their rate of learning over time; and the child's characteristics of learning have been identified. With this evidence, recommendations can be made about what works best to maximise the child's learning.

Benefits for the Early Years Settings

- Enables the early years setting to focus more time on children with SEN.
- Enables them to work more closely with parents and support service professionals and attend multi-agency planning and review meetings.
- Increased the skills of the practitioners by working closely with support services to find techniques that improve the child's rate of progress. There has also been a reported increase in practitioners' confidence when they see how they have been able to make a difference to the child.
- All settings are fully inclusive, which may not have been possible previously.

Benefits for the Local Authority

- Children's needs can be identified earlier and so help given earlier.
- More effective use of support services time when their advice is acted upon and the child makes more progress.
- Reduces the pressure on places at York's only enhanced resourced nursery and enables children to stay at a setting in their own locality.
- Identifies training and workforce development needs which can then be met primarily by support service practitioners.