



Early Learning and Community Childcare Hubs practice case study

Good practice from hubs

Top tips

- Use the **SEN and Disability in the Early Years Toolkit** as a baseline for training all practitioners linked to the hub.
- Having SENCOs come on board at the beginning allowed the hub to explore local provider needs, strategies for addressing these, and get ideas off the ground.
- Having a clear SEND focus for the hub allows you to dedicate resources and make a bigger impact. Hubs that have focused on SEND issues have built a strong sense of purpose.
- Offer training for all early years practitioners on the SEND Code of Practice.

Context

Contact a Family, is the UK charity for families with disabled children and young people - what the condition, whatever the needs, wherever they live. Contact a Family have partnered with 4Children on the Early Learning and Community Childcare Hubs programme for the last three years. In 2015/16 they delivered bespoke SEND training to the Hubs. This case study summarises learning from hubs that have a SEND focus.

Why have a SEND focus to your hub?

Having a clear SEND focus for the hub allows you to dedicate resources and make a bigger impact. Hubs that have focused on SEND issues have built a strong sense of purpose. Peer to peer learning across the hub has helped us improve practice for children with SEND.

Conduct a survey of providers to identify SEND training gaps and where the expertise is. Find out from PVI settings how confident they working with children with special or complex needs and whether they understand how to access top up funding for things like 1:1 care or specialist equipment.

This survey will help you develop an action plan of where the hub should focus its attention and how expertise can be shared within the hub. It important to build on your strengthens so look within your network for expertise and develop ways to enable everyone in the hub to learn from this. Recognise that you can't do everything yourself and you may need extra funding from the local authority or need to bring in external expertise.

Having a named SENCO to attend hub meetings will offer the opportunity to discuss, plan and prepare for a child with additional needs attending a nursery school or setting. Having SENCOs come on board at the beginning allowed the hub to explore local provider needs, strategies for addressing these, and get ideas off the ground

Involving health in your hub for children with SEND

Direct involvement from health services is a way of helping facilitate faster pathways for children with SEND to access SEN support or start the Education, Health and Care assessment process.

Health practitioners such as community nurses can make recommendations for the setting, help with training which will enable them to take up suitable childcare places sooner.

How can hubs continue to improve transitions for children with SEND

Focusing on transitions for children with SEND has helped improve the quality of information we offer their parents. Keeping the open lines of communication open between the setting, parent and school has allowed better sharing of information on the child needs with the school.

Have a transition strategies for each child's unique needs that is agreed by both parents and staff (in both setting and school) has help staff to ensure the child will feel safe and has built parental confidence.

"Getting this right in the early years helps parents build up trust and confidence with services later on and can make inclusion into school much easier.

"The successful transition has helped to improve my child's development so they don't lag behind at the very start of their primary education."

Hub play an important role in bringing providers together this helps with transition arrangements and plans. Knowledge and information can be shared on individual children who may find the transfer more difficult than their peers.

Using the toolkit for improve hub practice

[4Children](#) and the [Council for Disabled Children](#) (CDC) have produced a toolkit for SEN and disability in the early years. Each section of the toolkit provides a briefing on a particular aspect of the SEN and disability reforms as they apply to early years providers. Each section is based on the statutory requirements and the guidance from the early years, the SEN and the disability frameworks, and draws on a range of relevant practice guidance and other materials to provide an accessible guide to SEN and disability in the early years.

Towards the end of most of the sections of the toolkit is a useful tool, an activity or a reflective task to support practitioners in applying the particular topic to their own setting or hub.

Hubs have used the toolkit as a baseline for training needs and to reflect on their SEND practice. Hubs have used the tool to assess how their policies and practices support inclusive practice.

What are the challenges?

If PVI settings were not included in training and skill building, so there are now significant gaps in knowledge and skills.

The hub will have a huge role to play in terms of helping PVIs understand whether they can meet the needs of children with SEND within the 30 hour offer. However, there is concern that if settings do not receive additional support and resources for children with SEND they will not be able to offer extended hours to these children.

There has been limited focusing on blended childcare offer for children with SEND.

“Childminders have been invited to participate in hub meetings and SEND training, we are at the early stages of support childminding support children with SEND. “