



Early Learning and Community Childcare Hubs practice case study

Parent carer perspectives on the hub model

Top tips

Feedback from parents of young children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) on the hub model:

- Consider carefully ‘blended’ childcare for disabled children or children with SEN. Remember this blended offer may include specialist provision such as home care or hospice care.
- Produce your own ‘Hub Local Offer’ for parents with SEND. This will help parents understand that you have something to offer them that is tailored to the needs of children with SEND.
- They should help parents, childminders and individual settings to navigate the funding pathways for 1:1 support, specialist equipment and other SEN support.
- Hubs need to work closely with the specialist professionals in their local area so they can link into SEN support and the education, health and care process.
- Help families with disabled children get early help with short break services or other entitlements like financial support. *“Hubs must tell parents about Disability Living Allowance (DLA).”*
- Hubs can offer ‘value added’ information services on SEND childcare options as they will know the providers in the hub network better. *“Parents with disabled children often need more help with childcare decisions as they’ll be worried about safety and staff skills.”*
- Hubs can act as local network for PVI’s to link up with SEN Support, share good practice on early SEND identification.
- Hubs can signpost parents to help, advice and resources if worried and confused about either their child’s development or SEND changes.

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.

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Contact a Family ran two focus groups for parents with young disabled children¹ between January and February 2016 to inform the production of the practice case studies. Contact a Family asked parents to give their perspective on the aims and objectives of the Hub model (to improve quality, information and availability of early years education and childcare in a local area).

What are the benefits of the Hub model for parents with disabled children?

The blended offer has real potential for children with SEND however it will be difficult to achieve. Their parents will have a lot of competing priorities with appointments and involvement from other professionals and other family commitments.

The hubs model offers that opportunity to make the blended offer work with good training, communication and preparation across the range of providers. Remember this blended offer may include specialist provision such as home care or hospice care.

“The flexibility of the Community Childcare Hubs should enable greater access to childcare for disabled children, especially for families like mine who may require less “traditional” childcare. It would also appear to bring professionals together. One of the big concerns for parents and staff seems to be a lack of training or understanding. As you would expect, staff were worried about how to handle children with complex needs and will feel more comfortable and confident if they can contact other colleagues in the Hub who got experience.”

Why families with disabled children might have problems accessing your Hub?

- they may not think the Hub is aimed at them and therefore don't think their needs will be understood or met
- some parents may not trust mainstream services because of bad experiences in the past
- parents may not want to speak to someone who is not familiar with their child's disability particularly if the condition is rare.
- others may be worried about the attitude of other parents and children using a setting, particularly if the child has behaviour that challenges

¹ Including children with special educational needs, health conditions or development delay

- both parent and child are nervous about going into a new situation, where they don't know anyone, and they don't know about the disability

How can Hubs attract families with disabled children?

- Offer workshops on topics that parents need help with e.g. sleeping, behaviour that challenges; these could be advertised through local support groups. Contact a Family can offer free workshop to parents with SEND. Find out if Contact a Family are running a session in your area by visiting the [in your area](#) section on their website.
- Offer targeted advice/drop in sessions - you can use these to offer practical and emotional support, such as help with claiming [Disability Living Allowance](#).
- Invite a [parent support group](#) to host their meetings in one of the Hub settings or list local support groups on your Hub website. Find out more about local support groups in your area from Contact a Family.
- Link up with child development centres, special schools, and specialists (e.g. therapists, wheelchair services). Link to these on your Hub website.
- Organise information days - try inviting different services from across your area for parents to engage with; make it fun by offering face painting and lunch so parents can relax and socialise too.