Supporting effective use of data

Background

Sharing and making effective use of data to improve outcomes for children is a crucial factor in achieving one of the three key goals of an Early Learning and Childcare Partnership Hub: improving the quality of provision.

The analysis of local and national data can help a Hub to set the priorities for boosting quality and attainment across the area it covers. Partners, including primary and nursery schools, pre-schools, day nurseries, out of school clubs, childminders, and children's centres, can improve common practices so that children access high quality provision and experiences. For example, data that shows a gap in attainment for boys related to communication and language skills could lead to training all partners in a common approach such as Every Child a Talker. Effective use of data will maximise opportunities for the hub to plan a blended offer based on effective knowledge of supply and demand to secures the 30 hour entitlement and 2YO offer.

How can a Hub make effective use of data to support key goals?

Dorking Nursery School and Children's Centre's vision and strategy is based on understanding the children's data that comes from Surrey County Council. The outstanding-rated nursery school, which includes a children's centre and a non-maintained nursery for two- and three-year-olds, leads its local Hub.

HOW

ACTION FOR CHILDREN

WORKS

"Surrey County Council gives us local area data outcomes for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) compared to the county as whole," explains Donna Harwood-Duffy, Dorking Nursery School and Children's Centre headteacher. "We also use Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) data which gives a more specific outline at a school-by-school level about strengths, areas for improvement and trends. This means the whole partnership is aware of what it needs to focus on, and individual providers can compare their own progress against national trends. This is helpful to identify where they stand out or if more work is needed, supported by additional training or shared practice."

As well as using data to help partners identify goals, schools and children's centres can set themselves up as centres of expertise, building the partnership through training workshops, for example. "Our identification of gaps led to a common training and CPD plan, focusing on writing, and managing feelings and behaviour," says Ms Harwood-Duffy. "Partners who engaged benefited from understanding the data and understanding how to impact changes in their practice."

What are the challenges around accessing and using data effectively?

"Getting quality and timely data from the local authority and for each school in our area can prove difficult," says Ms Harwood-Duffy. "Once obtained it is also a challenge to find a model that makes sense of the data. For example how consistent is it between local authorities – this is important as children can be from other local authorities."

Some providers, including childminders and pre-schools, can struggle to understand the data and the format in which it is presented. "Shared ownership and trying to get everyone to sing from the same hymn sheet is a serious CPD challenge," says Ms Harwood-Duffy.

The reasons behind data sharing, and the use to which the data is going to be put, must be clearly defined, according to Hub lead Oasis Academy Limeside. Otherwise partners may become suspicious of the role of the Hub, particularly those from the PVI sector.

What have Hubs learnt about data sharing?

"If we launched today, we would seek to agree a common framework for the sharing of data from all providers, as pre-schools currently do not share data," says Ms Harwood-Duffy. "This would enable us to identify trends setting by setting. In addition, we would argue for easier data sharing of specific categories of children from the local authority and challenge the Data Protection hoops that block so much sharing."

What steps can Hubs take to further improve their use of data?

"We are going to analyse data in our most deprived area in more depth," says Ms Harwood-Duffy. "We are trying to find out what schools the children go to who live in this area. This informs schools about which pre-schools these children come from, so that our support, outreach, and expertise has a stronger focus."