



EYSEND Data and Evidence Report 2023 Executive Summary

Since 2017, the Early Years SEND Partnership has supported practitioners, parents and carers with training, resources, and an approach to sharing learning, with the aim to increase access and inclusion in early years for children with SEN and disabilities. This year, the six EYSEND Partners have gathered data and evidence of impact from meetings with local area (LA) representatives, surveys, local data sets, external research, and case studies to compile into this report.

The main findings demonstrate a clear strength of the EYSEND Partnership as a convenor and hub for knowledge sharing and systems change. Training, national seminars, and regional events have been oversubscribed across the board in 2022-23, despite mounting staffing pressures in the early years sector. Strategic support given to LAs has strengthened multi-agency working, improving outcomes for young children with more joined up working between education, health, and social care. Over the past three years, the EYSEND Partnership has reached 21,477 people (16,671 practitioners and 4,806 parents) through training, events, and targeted strategic support.

Another key strength of the Partnership is how the six different strands of support are mutually reinforcing of one another through close collaboration and communication between the Partners. One LA, Cumbria, has received 5 different types of EYSEND strategic support. Cumbria report that because of the support they have been able to identify training needs to better support children with SEN and disabilities. They also report that the impact has also been seen in the quality of referrals made for SEN support but also Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) requests to assess (see appendix 9 in main report for Cumbria's 2022 long-term impact report).

The context within which the EYSEND partnership is operating is not immune to the current challenges experienced by the sector in the wake of the pandemic, namely lack of funding and issues with staff retention and recruitment. The impact of the pandemic has widened the gaps in access and attainment for children with SEN and disabilities in the early years¹. Despite the challenges, local authority representatives and practitioners have demonstrated widespread enthusiasm and willingness to offer solutions and commit to improving inclusive practice across the LA. For some LAs, the strategic support has been transformative, transitioning from a fragmented approach where services across early years worked in silos, to having a strong, clear, and comprehensive strategic plan implemented through improved joined up working. For some areas, lack of staff capacity and exhaustion of the workforce

¹ Then There Was Silence, Disabled Children's Partnership (2021) [\[Link\]](#)

can affect momentum to implement action plans and routes for change. EYSEND Partners have recognised this and have put in place extra support for LAs where possible, such as additional drop-in sessions for Level 3 inclusion training or 'refresher' sessions for pre-existing LAs to revitalise previous projects.

The recent SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan, published in early March 2023, directly references each of the six different strands of strategic support offered through the Partnership. At a national level, as we move towards a more inclusive mainstream education system, support given to LAs to enhance their ordinarily available provision, speech, language and communication pathways, transitions and co-produced inclusive strategies has never been more important.

In recognition of the successes from the Partnership and recent developments in the SEND and AP Improvement Plan, the following recommendations have been made to enhance the programme:

1. Identify in-demand training sessions and focus resources to developing and expanding this training offer;
2. Strengthen the EYSEND network to establish Communities of Practice on a variety of relevant topics which meet at regular intervals throughout the year as advisory groups, workshops, national seminars and regional events, in hybrid format where possible;
3. Develop the training and strategic support offer to focus on supporting one - and two-year-olds with SEN and disabilities, following the Spring budget childcare announcement;
4. Build more robust impact measurement tools into strategic support from the first interactions e.g. website engagement data, longer term case studies that span 1+ years;
5. Ensure child's voice as a core element that underpins data and evidence collection processes;
6. Support LAs already integrating EYSEND work with Family Hubs and Start for Life and amplify good examples of collaboration between these two initiatives;
7. Continue to deepen communication between Partners when identifying overlapping LAs and offer multi-pronged support to stakeholders.

