



Data and Evidence Report

March 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](#) 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 can affect momentum to implement action plans and routes for change. EYSEND Partners have

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



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.



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1. Introduction

There is a growing attainment gap in outcomes for young children with SEN and disabilities and this has been exacerbated by the pandemic². The EYSEND Partnership brings together significant specialist expertise to support LAs in addressing the gap. The approach is strategic, with the overall aim of developing and improving support given to children with SEN and disabilities in the locality. It starts with a review and the identification of local priorities to improve outcomes for children with support tailored to those priorities. This tailored support has now reached 99 LAs, with the work being locally owned and regionally and nationally shared. Training and support for practitioners, parents and local authorities is made widely available and has reached 21,477 people (16,671 practitioners and 4,806 parents) in the last three years.

The EYSEND Partnership consists of six organisations each with a different specialism: The Council for Disabled Children (lead), Contact, Dingley's Promise, the Early Childhood Unit at the National Children's Bureau, nasen and Speech and Language UK (formerly I CAN). The breadth of expertise across the Partnership has enabled us to cover a wide range of topics through our training and local, regional and national support. The key EYSEND issues covered:

- understanding the needs of every child in the early years;
- an inclusive whole setting approach to SEN and disability;
- early identification;
- building practitioner skills in understanding and responding to early language and communication needs in settings;

² Special educational needs and disability: an analysis and summary of data sources (DfE, 2022)



- developing better local pathways to the right level of expertise for young children with speech, language and communication needs;
- partnership with parents and co-production;
- parent workshops to support families;
- transitions into settings and into school in the time of COVID;
- improving the home- setting and home- school communication;
- 'ordinarily available' provision;
- support to the home learning environment for young children with SEN and disabilities.

To assess impact of the programme, EYSEND Partners have gathered data and evidence of impact from LAs worked with across the three years. This report offers an overview of the key findings gathered from meetings with LA representatives, surveys, reports and case studies. It begins by providing the quantitative data of practitioners and parents trained through the programme. Then, we look at each strand of work in turn, drawing on case studies from each of the six programmes of work. Finally, the report offers a thematic analysis of the data and evidence, looking at four key focus areas: 1) The EYSEND network: a knowledge sharing hub, 2) the programme's support in COVID recovery, 3) integration of the programme with family hubs and 4) take up of FEEE. The report draws together the findings in the conclusion and makes recommendations for a new iteration of the programme.



2. Quantitative Data from Across the Partnership

During the 3 years the programme has been funded:

- 99 LAs have developed improved EYSEND strategies.
- 42 LAs have been supported across two or more thematic areas of work.
- Engagement from LAs has increased year on year.
- Open-access training has been oversubscribed across all strands of work with 90%+ high satisfaction levels from training.
- 98% of participants who fed back on training reported increased understanding and confidence in applying the learning in practice.
- All open-access training and national seminars have had high engagement, especially in 2022-23, particularly:
 - Meeting the Needs of Every Child (nasen) - oversubscribed by 500%.
 - Social Communication Training (Speech & Language UK) - oversubscribed by 200%.
 - Toilet Training (Contact) - waiting list of 200 people.
 - Equality Act (Council for Disabled Children) training attendance has increased by 75% in comparison to 21-22.

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Total
Number of parents/families reached	1,964	1,515	1,327	4,806
Number of practitioners trained	2,837	6,750	7,084	16,671
Overall impact/benefit	4,801	8,265	8,411	21,477



3. Ordinarily Available Provision (Council for Disabled Children)

The Council for Disabled Children (CDC) support LAs with their local offer by developing their 'ordinarily available provision' (OAP). This work involves bringing together representatives from across the early years sector including education, health, social care sectors, including parents to establish what best inclusive practice looks like. OAP provides a framework which sets out the provision that is 'ordinarily available' to all children across an LA in all settings and includes practical evidence-based targeted support strategies for those children who may have needs that require additional and different support as part of the graduated response across settings. This collaborative and consistent approach is responsive to needs rather than diagnosis, encouraging LAs to take a systematic area-wide approach to supporting children with SEN and disabilities within a mainstream framework. Routes to specialist support and associated resources are also included within OAP. The OAP work is locally owned and paves the way for joined up working between early years practitioners and parents.

CDC has worked with 16 different LAs on their ordinarily available provision, 14 of which they supported in 2022-23. At the start of each piece of work, short- and long-term outcomes are established to provide a long-term vision for the work. CDC engaged with some of their 'earlier LAs' they worked with through the programme (since 2019) to measure the impact of the OAP against previously stated outcomes. Manchester is one of those 'earlier LAs' and some examples of their agreed outcomes are as follows:

- Parents are knowledgeable about the support for their children;
- To ensure settings are supported and challenged regularly and good practice is evidenced;
- Improved consistency of provision across settings.

Manchester refers to their OAP as a "dynamic document", as they are constantly inviting in feedback from parents and professionals, leading to a few iterations of the document since inception³. This feedback also led to a suggestion from an independent Speech and Language Therapist for the document to add a bilingual focus. Parents' feedback was that they were happy to see home languages valued. Manchester's lead on the project also emphasised that the OAP document has been a useful tool for discussion with PVI settings on expectations of inclusive practice and identifying where extra training support is needed for practitioners. This is paving the way for the gradual process of achieving greater consistency across settings.

Leicester City, at the beginning of the work established that they would like to create an accessible document for parents which sets out what they can expect for their child in the early years. They also wished to create a shared understanding which leads to reduced pressures on high-need or top-up funding. When developing their main OAP document,

³ Manchester EY Ordinarily Available Provision [\[Link\]](#)

Leicester City created a series of 'easy read' versions aimed at parents and EY practitioners⁴. Feedback from parents has not been so easy to gather but they have found when visiting settings, that the OAP documents are pinned on the walls to support practitioners with strategies to support children with additional learning needs. To grow awareness of the document amongst parents, they have also started to put a link to the OAP on their reports for individual children. Looking back at the intended outcome in relation to funding, Leicester City also report to be using their OAP as a way of documenting evidence for SENIF applications, whereby settings are encouraged to test out the high-quality teaching tools in the OAP before applying for funding.

Rochdale launched their OAP document in September 2022 and worked with CDC to provide a case study as evidence of impact to date ([see appendix 1](#) for the full case study). Although it is early days in operation of this new approach, evidence to date, including feedback sought from settings, Area SENCOs and parents/carers, show that the intended outcomes are being achieved. It has improved:

- practitioners' expertise and confidence in identifying children's needs and adopting a range of approaches to meeting them;
- the quality of ordinarily available provision across settings;
- information for and engagement with parents/carers and other professionals in relation to individual children's needs, the interventions used to support them, and the progress that has been made/or not made over time;
- the referral pathway for targeted support and reduced the level of referrals for such support. through more needs being met at the universal level. This enabled the input of professionals providing targeted and specialist support to be focused on those children who need it. Figures show a reduction of referrals year on year between 2021/22 and 2022/23:

	2021/22	2022/23
September	29	19
October	67	16
November	33	20
December	17	2
January	30	21
February	32	30
Total	208	108

This is a typical response from a setting:

"The OAP assessment and review tool has had a positive impact. Sharing the document alongside strategies with the parents, in a clear way, has enabled them to be more open to

⁴ Leicester City inclusive provision easy read documents [\[Link\]](#)



accepting help for their children and better able to feedback during review meetings. The parents are more open with us about what the children are like at home, including showing us some videos. Mum has asked us in her feedback comments to try some different strategies as she knows her children best and as this is all recorded it's very clear. Without the OAP we would have made a referral to SENCo for both children, but it would have taken a while as parents were hesitant. Now we feel a referral isn't needed. However, should we have needed the referral, mum would be less hesitant as she is more informed. We intend to use it more often before making the step of referrals, we feel it's both practitioner and parent friendly."

More information on Rochdale's next steps can be found in [appendix 1](#).

In summary, the OAP work LAs have embarked upon, with the support of CDC, has strengthened communication between services in the early years and collectively established a key set of expectations around provision that settings and parents have both coproduced and can utilise. Data on the long-term impacts such as improvement in the quality of referrals for specialist support, EHCP assessments, and top-up funding is starting to emerge and will be closely monitored. Ultimately, with improvement in the provision at the universal level and a focus on quality first teaching and practice, more children will have their needs met. The OAP work provides a solid basis for identifying where gaps in provision are and directing resources towards training and support to areas where needed. As the early years landscape shifts, constant review of the OAP work is vital, highlighting the importance of ensuring OAP is kept at the forefront of the inclusion agenda.



4. Co-production and Parent Engagement (Contact)

Contact supports LAs in coproduction and engaging parents and carers in decision making in the early years, using an appreciative enquiry approach. They host workshops for parents and practitioners, including strategic leads, services and settings, follow the Genuine Partnership's Four Cornerstones Model. Some of the key outcomes LAs want to achieve through the programme are:

- Co-production to be meaningful and purposeful;
- All parents to see the value of working in partnership with professionals and services and want to be involved;
- Local partners to actively engage with families of children of all ages;
- Every programme, project or change undertaken to be developed in partnership from the start;
- All schools and settings to prioritise co-production as the way of working.

Contact has supported 25 LAs since 2019 with their coproduction and parent engagement strategies. In Warwickshire, Contact's support on Early Years coproduction has inspired the local authority and Parent Carer Forum to develop an 'Inclusion Charter', based on the Four Cornerstones model of Welcome and Care, Value and Include; Communicate; and Work in Partnership. The Charter has been signed by schools and work is underway to extend this to early years settings, including development of a set of metrics to capture progress help to enable implementation.

In Wandsworth, as part of the SEN strategy, and with support from Contact's coproduction action learning sets, the LA and parent carer forum have worked together to understand challenges faced by the LA, which has helped motivate parents to collaborate in the borough.

'The parent carer forum saw it from the LA's point of view, the pressures LAs are under. We shared this with parents so there was better understanding, we could look at it from both points of view.'

Wandsworth's approach included parent carer involvement in SENCO training, for SENCOs to hear parent perspectives, ensuring parents feel greater involvement and respect as part of their child's educational journey. Feedback from parent carers on what helps has been shared with SENCOs and early years settings, including communication with parents, involving alumni parents in transition to primary, how to run meetings to make parents feel like equal partners in their child's development and how to share information transparently so parents understand circumstances and pressures for staff. Practical steps being implemented from the parent's feedback also include asking staff to consider their use of language, for example, anxiety is likely to be caused by a 'Cause for Concern' sheet. Settings finding ways to avoid



lots of written text was also a recommendation from parents, as a result settings are considering using videos and pre-recorded explanations of interventions.

Another of Contact's LA partners, York, has moved from consulting parents and carers to fully engaging them as partners with professionals in the co-production of plans, services and support for children and young people with SEN and disabilities. In 2019, an Ofsted/CQC LA SEND review identified embedding strategic co-production in its approach to improving outcomes for children and young people with SEN and disabilities as a key area for development. By the time of a re-inspection in 2022, co-production had been recognised as a strength of the LA's practice. While developments have not been confined to early years, progress in that area have given impetus to the work.

York's model of joint partnership has had a positive impact on the confidence of parents and carers. It has enabled professionals across education, health and care services to feel confident in embedding co-production in their work; children and young people say they enjoy being fully involved in decisions. Surveys and conversations with parent and carers, children and young people have shown that the focus on joint partnership working has made a difference:

- "Engagement through all of this has been so uplifting compared to where it was 4 years ago"
- "Thank you, this is the most positive I have felt in the last 4 or so years"
- "I do feel this is the start of it and we will get families back on board and engaging with us."
- "All of this is fantastic and positive, I attend a lot of meetings and I see this being a positive change."
- "It makes me feel listened to and it allows me to visualise and have an understanding of some of the people who make key decisions that affect my child's journey."

York have faced some challenges throughout their journey including engaging with the wider cohorts of families and gathering feedback consistently. Feedback from families is that sometimes they are asked for too much engagement, and sessions or focus groups are held at inconvenient locations or times. The strong relationship York has with their Parent Carer Forum means they can address and put plans in place to improve engagement. For example, York's Participation and Engagement Officer is attending events and parent groups to gain feedback from families in comfortable environments whereby families already are rather than expecting them to travel or make alternative arrangements just to share their views. See [appendix 2](#) for the full case study on York.



5. Transitions into Settings and Schools (Dingley's Promise)

Dingley's Promise provides strategic direction to LAs on how to best support children with special needs and disabilities (SEND) to have the best transitions from Early Years settings to school. Example outcomes sought at the start of the work are:

- All schools and early years settings with a clear understanding of what is required in order to secure successful transitions;
- Better planning from early years settings and schools to support transitions;
- Improved confidence among staff in schools and early years settings in preparing for transitions and sustaining placements in schools;
- Improved outcomes for children, including fewer absences and exclusions and improvements in well-being.

Dingley's has worked with 22 LAs to manage improved outcomes for children across the last three years. Their work with Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole saw the launch of an inclusion charter which has resulted in 92% of parents now reporting a positive transition and an increase in the number of children going into mainstream schools, now at 10% above the national average.

Dingley's also supported the Early Years Inclusion team at Bristol who developed comprehensive guidance as a key means of supporting better transitions ([see appendix 3](#)). The guidance and support system has been in operation for a relatively short time and a review of its effectiveness is under way to assess its impact.

Nevertheless, the case study offers an example that illustrates the impact sought from wider implementation. It follows the story of Jemima (name changed), a looked after child who had a range of traumatic early life experiences and found it difficult to regulate and manage her emotions and behaviour. When school placements had been confirmed, the setting worked closely with the school, SENCO, support staff, Jemima's grandmother and the new class teacher to develop an enhanced transition pack and support information. The new class teacher and supporting staff visited the setting to play with Jemima and make her feel comfortable ahead of the transition. See below the feedback from the transition experience:

School perspective: "I felt really supported by the pre-school. They really were open to us coming to visit more than once and what they showed us was a true impression of how Jemima could be - rather than saying it's all fine. We know that our working together was really beneficial for Jemima's grandmother - it really helped the whole process for Jemima that we had good communication and transfer."

Pre-school view: "The school really listened to us about our experience and concerns and treated us as professionals. It really felt like we were working together and sharing



information to make the transition as smooth as possible. The school really invested in the transition process. Jemima's school let her previous setting know she had settled well and her grandmother dropped in to the setting to share that Jemima was doing well with her reading and despite moving to a new house, she had chosen to keep her there because of how well she had settled and was getting on."

For the full transcript of Jemima's transition journey, please see [appendix 3](#).

More recently Dingley's work with LAs has evolved to support at a more strategic level, helping them to start thinking about how they can measure what's going on around transitions, and use those measurements to make a difference to every child's journey. Dingley's worked with LAs to understand what data existed already and how it can be brought together and used more effectively to better understand what works and what doesn't around transitions; and then further developed the action plan to focus on those core activities that would make a difference.

Swindon is a good example of where this has worked well. They were the first to gather data that spanned the whole journey from early years through to school, and used that data to identify areas of focus for their action plan. Their work resulted in stronger relationships with both families and schools, and they've been able to share their experiences with other local authorities, thus helping them on their journeys too.

Dingley's have also shared their Exit Entry Pathway (EEP) Tool with all the local authorities with whom they have worked. The EEP is a set of tools created to support children, families and settings through their transitions journey.

Reading have seen particular success with the use of the EEP. They created a survey based on the self-evaluation tool used in the first session, which was distributed to wider partners for example schools, the earlier sector, parents and other agencies to provide a baseline for measuring impact over time. They then used the EEP to act as a mechanism for acting on the learns from that survey, resulting in strong relationships across families and schools.

6. Early Childhood Unit at NCB: Home Learning Environment

The Early Childhood Unit (ECU) at the National Children's Bureau focus on improving the home learning environment in collaboration with LAs. Their 'Special Making it Real' (SMiR) programme has a combination of exciting and developmental Special Treasure Chests and workshops for families and practitioners.

Examples of agreed outputs and outcomes are:

- Parents of children with SEND better able to support their child's development in early literacy within the Home Learning Environment (HLE).
- Improved HLE for all families with child under 5, through HLE strand Family Hubs strategy.
- Parents receive 'treasure basket' of resources to support them to undertake HLE activities identified in workshop.
- Staff (from children's centres, family hubs, nurseries or LA officers) trained in delivering HLE messages to parents in relation to literacy for children with SEND.
- 12 parents of children with SEND attend Home Learning Environment workshop.

ECU have supported 5 LAs in 2022-23. One of these LAs is Brighton & Hove and the REAL approach has been embedded through the council's Children's centres under-fives teams since 2020. Following an increase of young children attending groups with possible SEND since lockdown restrictions lifted, ECU worked with a range of stakeholders in Brighton and Hove from the ethnic minority achievement service, to their inclusion service, to the NHS' seaside view child development programme. ECU facilitated two parent and carer workshops on a SMiR with the following feedback:

- "I am a Foster carer and feel that your training would be FAB for ALL our Under 5s carers. Mia and I came/were invited due to our children's additional medical and genetic and more obvious (!) needs but all that info would benefit ALL of our Foster children who are usually delayed or have the "SEN" of emotional and physical trauma and neglect. Do you do a training session for that and these carers?"
- "I loved that my child started using some signing to communicate. She loved the messy play. We have enjoyed it lots!"
- "We are doing more playing at home now, especially water play, the memory magic and sounds walks. It gave us lots of great ideas."
- "He engaged with all the activities, especially he loved the book. He tells me the story all the time. I love that the activities were adapted to the child's needs and likes."

139 children and families have completed a four-week course with parents reporting the below improvement in an area of literacy development linked to the HLE e.g. a child's ability to share a book.

A Lot Better	106
A Bit Better	18
No Change	7

This work is in its nascent stages, with many of the children attending with SEND having only recently been identified by Health Visitors and are at the very start of the referral/assessment process, so do not have a formal SEND diagnosis. Further to that, some families requested a space and time to meet in the centres to build social/support networks. ECU have been able to facilitate this and will continue to develop this during the transition to family hubs. For further detail on ECU's support of Brighton and Hove, see [appendix 8](#).

Another area where the SMiR approach has had a positive impact is in East Sussex. Teams across ISEND, the Early Years Improvement Team and Early Communication Support Workers took part in this programme with some encouraging feedback from parents. In one of their schools, Sandown school, parents have learned Makaton signs and now have sets of visuals so that they can be consistent with the nursery. The 'Stay and plays' have been an effective way to welcome parents back after the pandemic. They now feel part of the setting and understand how to use everyday resources to promote learning. After being involved in the programme, the following was reported in the setting questionnaire:

- 100% found the webinars, information and Treasure Bags useful
- 87.5% used the Treasure Bags with all children (not just those with SEND)
- 85.7% said that they felt children made progress as a direct result of using the resources.
- 75% said they had shared the activities and resources, and how to use them, with their colleagues.
- 83.3% said they had shared the activities/resources with the SENCO.
- 85.7% said they would continue to use the activities/treasure bags
- 57.5% said that the ideas had inspired them to think of other resources/activities to share with parents.



7. A Whole Setting Approach to SEND (nasen)

nasen works with LAs to develop a whole setting approach to supporting children with SEN and disabilities in the early years. This involves producing a cohesive action plan for early years SEND provision post-pandemic. Some of the key outcomes identified from the outset by LAs involved in the work are:

- All young children in the early years to have their needs identified early and be provided with appropriate support in their setting;
- A reduction in escalation to specialist support services;
- Staff in settings to have the knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence to identify and support children with SEN and disabilities;
- Partnership working within the LA and between the LA and external partners to be strengthened, focusing on children's transitions.

nasen has worked with 16 LAs in total and 61 settings have carried out EYSEND whole setting reviews from 2022-23. Two LAs offered their reflections on developing a whole setting approach to SEND: Plymouth and Northamptonshire (see [appendices 4, 5 and 6](#)). The impact reported from the two LAs were as follows:

Practitioners

In Northamptonshire, SENCos reported how confident they felt in delivering in-house training and how the training had made a positive difference to the competence and confidence of all staff. SENCos shared how all staff are now part of the SEND processes; this is no longer the exclusive province of the SENCo. One setting has been awarded an outstanding judgement by Ofsted and their work with children with SEND was explicitly praised.

In Plymouth, evidence reported by settings shows how the EYSEND review tool has enabled them to identify areas where staff lacked confidence and take action to address those through training and the development of practical resources. Staff have a more positive relationship with SENCos, welcome their support and advice and report improved confidence in identifying and supporting children's needs and in having difficult conversations with parents.

Children & Families

Settings view themselves as more inclusive and this has benefitted all children. Children with SEN and disabilities have access to broader experiences, benefit from earlier identification and intervention and are flourishing with the support they now have.

In Plymouth, SENCO evaluations show that parents report a better understanding of their child's needs as a result of staff sharing interventions as part of Individual Education Plan reviews and other meetings and through more partnership working with their child's setting. Parents report that they are now aware of who in the setting to approach if they have



concerns about their child and have been signposted to local services for support e.g. SENDIASS, the Health Visiting Team, the Local Offer or Parent/carers Forum

In Northamptonshire, a parent described the way in which her child's setting had fully supported her child's complex needs and worked closely to ensure continuity of arrangements/provision, for example supporting home learning by providing duplicate activities for the child to complete at home.

Local Policy and Strategy

In Northamptonshire, the Early Years SEND review project enabled the local authority to introduce a reflective process to settings across the county. SENCos fed back how they welcomed the review as a way of changing cultures. Settings reported that the reviews helped to broaden their focus from COVID to setting improvement and 'business as usual'.

At the leadership level, Plymouth's SEND Strategy Board has been engaged in the work from the outset. Building on the work undertaken so far, action plans are now being drawn up for the local Early Years Strategic Board on strengthening Plymouth's Graduated Approach to Inclusion, developing an Inclusion Charter, improving transitions between settings and securing the most effective use of available funding and resources.

Multi-agency working

The Specialist Action Learning Sets (SALS) provided a good opportunity to further strengthen multi-agency working at a vital time – during the COVID pandemic and a restructuring within the local authority/disaggregation into two new local authorities. As new teams joined the SALS meetings, they were updated on changes and this helped professionals to better promote and signpost settings and families toward a range of services. SENCos described how, following their SEND reviews, they reviewed and adapted transition processes and partnerships with parents, including incorporating the parent voice more effectively.

The work has been met with a series of challenges, especially for Northamptonshire in continuing the momentum of the work after services were disaggregated following a reorganisation of the local authorities. But the passion and commitment of staff in settings and LA teams and services were key in addressing this. The support from the Senior Leadership Team has been vital in helping to maintain momentum, as has the involvement of nasen. For more information about these two case studies and for the full reports from the local authorities, please see appendices [4 to 6](#).



8. Speech and Language UK: Communication Pathways

Speech and Language UK provide support to LAs wishing to develop or progress their integrated speech, language and communication strategy and pathway for children aged 0-5. Examples of agreed outcomes are as follows:

- Existence of a long-term underpinning Pathway and Strategy for supporting communication across education and health in the local authority area;
- Services for communication will be joined up and co-ordinated - A more standardised and consistent offer across the LA;
- All professionals working with children will implement appropriate support based on the pathway;
- Empowered practitioners and parents who are able to support children's communication development with confidence;
- Support for early language development to be integrated into the Ordinarily Available Provision of every setting as part of a universal offer

Speech and Language UK have worked with 36 LAs that have now made their Early Years Strategy and pathway a priority. Speech and Language UK through their work have embedded why and how language development in the early years is essential and the critical role communication plays in children's development. One of Speech and Language's supported LAs, Cornwall, has developed a pathway for staff in settings to access additional advice through telephone, by email, and through direct consultation with Senior Area SENCOs (see full case study in [appendix 7](#)). This supports settings in implementing the programme and improving outcomes for children. An online Early Years Portal is being developed to enable the integrated two-year check between health and early years settings. Work to fully implement the programme started in Autumn 2022 following the successful recruitment of appropriate staff, including a full time dedicated Early Years Speech and Language Therapist and a Nursery Nurse specialising in speech, language and communication. Cornwall intend to make five further appointments to ensure each locality has a Nursery Nurse specialising in speech, language and communication.

Data is being collected on the impact of the programme and its contribution to improving outcomes for children. Feedback to date from staff and parents is very encouraging:

"The support/strategy ideas and guidance have been beneficial to enable children to make progress. Our setting has been well supported by the Area SENDCo and Child Development Nursery Nurse. Their work has had a huge impact on key children and the progress they have made."



Our staff are happy to share learning and strategies with each other to support a whole setting approach. The Area SENDCo and Child Development Nursery Nurse have always ensured that our staff feel confident with delivering interventions they have suggested.

Support provided by staff from the Child Development Centre and Inclusion Team as well as the Early Years Speech and Language Therapist has not only supported us as a setting, they also support the families in a lovely holistic way!... This has really helped to quell anxieties and worries for both families and setting...

Parents have built sound relationships with all professionals involved which has also supported the needs of their children being met in setting and at home.

Our views are always listened to I think the communication is great both ways and we work very well together to get the support our daughter need, and we receive help for us as parents.

Without the support that's been in place for our child her progress wouldn't be happening... the words she is now starting to say wouldn't be happening and the interactions with children would be very limited...."

Pressures on staff from day-to-day work, including the impact of COVID recovery, limited the time available for securing funds and appointing key staff to set up the early language programme. The enthusiasm of staff in settings and local teams has driven implementation, encouraging a shift in focus for Senior Area SENDCos from working with individual children to a more holistic role empowering staff to provide a whole setting approach.



9. The EYSEND Network: A Knowledge Sharing Hub

By bringing these different strands of work together into one partnership, within one framework for project management, monitoring and reporting; there is an immediate benefit in terms of efficiency. The Partnership sets ambitious targets with effective monthly monitoring and quarterly reporting; providing different levels of support nationally through the regional approach and bespoke local support for those whose need is greatest.

A 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 through the multi-pronged support, they have been able to identify training needs more effectively to better support children with SEN and disabilities. In 2019/2020, no child in Cumbria with an EHCP achieved the Good Level of Development (GLD), whereas nationally, GLD for children with an EHCP was 4.5%. Statistical data for 2021/2022, although not directly comparable due to the implementation of the revised EYFS, shows there has been an increase in the number of children with an EHCP who have achieved a GLD, which in Cumbria is now 3.8% (national average 3.7%). The impact has also been seen in the quality of referrals made for SEN support but also in EHCP requests to assess. For more information on how receiving multiple levels of support has impacted Cumbria, see [appendix 9](#).

In addition, Cornwall has drawn closer the strategic support it has received from both Speech and Language UK and CDC. Their speech and language Communication Tool is being embedded within the ordinarily available provision document, enabling more children to have their needs met earlier and for targeted and specialist support to be focused on those whose needs cannot be met in this way (see [appendix 7](#)).

The EYSEND Programme provides a range of opportunities throughout the year for Partners, experts in the field, practitioners, and parents from across England to convene. These take the form of:

- network Action Learning Sets where LA representatives at different stages of receiving a particular strand of support to share successes and challenges;
- advisory groups which are attended by experts in SEN and Disability and early years to provide guidance for direction of the programme;
- national seminars held by each Partner on salient themes, inviting in external speakers;
- annual regional events which bring together all the above in-person to share experiences, successes and challenges.

Consistently, the feedback is that attendees appreciate the opportunity to learn about good practice happening in a different LA, hear about cutting-edge research in the sector and feel



connected and supported through a challenging time for the sector. Some of the qualitative feedback we have received in our surveys have been listed below:

- "Enabled links to other local authorities, provided a wealth of information and provided great opportunities for specific projects."
- "Allowed us time to focus, network and learn from experts' experiences."
- "The opportunity to hear about practice in other areas of the country and to hear how they have overcome barriers to working with a multiagency approach."
- "How I can share this with other families and the connections parents have made with each other through the training."⁵
- "Thank you ... for your role in creating such an empowering network of likeminded people. It was a huge privilege to be able to look at ways of working in partnership to change the narrative and both enhance and enrich the life chances for children and their families."⁶

Two out of three EYSEND regional events in 2022-23 were held as hybrid events, which enabled greater access and encouraged wider involvement from a range of stakeholders. Of those who submitted feedback, 60% voluntarily commented on the smooth running of the hybrid session and their appreciation of virtual attendees being included in the sessions.

Those who are part of the EYSEND network have also submitted in the annual survey some suggestions for developing the programme, most notably for a greater focus on younger-aged children (1 and 2 years) and SEND sufficiency. These have been incorporated into recommendations in the final chapter.

⁵ EYSEND 2022-23 Annual Survey

⁶ Feedback given by speaker to CDC following Behaviour & Equality Act Seminar in February 2023

10. COVID Recovery

The Ofsted 2021-22 annual report identified an increase in children with SEN and disabilities post-pandemic⁷. Children's absence from early years settings and delays in routine health checks has increased the prevalence of early speech and language problems. Furthermore, the lack of time in settings has also had a negative impact on children's personal, social and emotional development, with many children struggling with social communication skills. These issues are also compounded by what many regard as a recruitment crisis in education and social care and many children continue to lack stability and security in their early education. 94% of local authorities report difficulty in finding staff with the required qualifications for childcare, with most saying 'very difficult'.⁸ With rising costs of living, many early years practitioners have opted for better paid jobs or are retraining in another career.

The EYSEND Partnership set out in its aim for 2022-23 to support the Department for Education (DfE) with COVID recovery efforts in the early years. The Partnership conducted a survey in May 2020, which identified some of the main concerns of practitioners and parents in relation to COVID-19 and the impact on children with SEN and disabilities. The main concerns were lack of preparation for transition to reception, loss of observation and assessment of young children on SEN support, and widening SEN/non-SEN gap⁹. To address these concerns, some of the suggestions were increased support for the HLE, creating continuities between setting and school, and putting in place long-term support for speech and language delays. The evidence and data during and post-pandemic have influenced Partners' approach to the strategic support and training offered.

Contact, for example, tailor their training towards parental needs and requests, adjusting their training schedule accordingly. Speech and Language UK have designed a series of webcasts for practitioners to receive training flexibly as many of them are unable to attend structured live sessions as they are needed in settings to keep within ratio requirements. As parents spend more time with children in the home post-pandemic, ECU at NCB have developed training for parents to support the HLE with low or no-cost resources for parents to use from special 'treasure chests'. CDC and nasen focus on the importance of quality first teaching and upskilling the workforce on the ground, moving away from the misguided idea of 1:1 support as the single best way to support a young child with SEN and disabilities¹⁰.

All Partners ensure that there is a long-term vision built into the conversations in action learning sets (ALSs) and that longer term outcomes are differentiated from shorter term outputs. It is difficult to show a direct correlation between improvements in LAS' SEND

⁷ Ofsted Annual Report 2021-22 [\[Link\]](#)

⁸ Childcare Survey, Coram, 2022 [\[Link\]](#)

⁹ EYSEND partnership Covid-19 Survey Summary Report, 2020 [\[Link\]](#)

¹⁰ The Inclusion Illusion, Rob Webster, 2022 [\[Link\]](#)



inspections, quality of provision and the support given through the EYSEND Partnership. Nevertheless, the EYSEND case studies provide a small snapshot of some of the best practice happening across the country, despite all the post-pandemic stressors, which is improving the lives of young children with SEN and disabilities.



11. Integration of Family Hubs

Of the 75 LAs eligible for family hubs, the EYSEND Partnership has worked with a total of 54 in the last three years. A core aim of the 2022-23 programme was to include links to family hubs and ensure that they are built into LAs' inclusive strategy planning. As the family hubs programme is currently being rolled out, we have seen a convergence of these two initiatives. For example, in Brighton & Hove, the weekly group meets to support parents with the HLE will be a new service offer for family hubs. East Sussex have a proposal for all practitioners to be trained in the Making it REAL (MiR) as part of the family hubs programme. This is a real bonus for the programme as indicates the head of service is on board and signed up to MiR/Special MiR.

Speech and Language UK have also reported a key priority of family hubs in some areas is children's language and communication. Family hubs funding in some areas is viewed as a positive opportunity to develop children's communication pathway and strategy. This is evident in Cornwall which is involving the hubs to carry out Cornwall's Early Years Strategy and its Early Years Safeguarding Strategy to improve support for children who are not in settings. For other LAs, such as Cumbria, the early years inclusion team is already embedded in family hubs so they are naturally already involved in the development of their ordinarily available provision.

For many of the LAs, integration of EYSEND with family hubs is a priority for their next stages of development: In North Northamptonshire, plans include developing links between early years settings and the planned family hubs, particularly in respect of home learning. Indeed, the next steps for Leicester City are the development of early years help within family hubs. This would involve the SEND team, Health Visitors and Link teachers to create a 'team around the family' approach, which will identify children who have not taken up the 2-year-old funding offer. In ALS meetings, Partners are recording increasing representation from family hubs or a strong desire to have representatives attend, with the understanding that involvement of family hubs in early years strategic planning is fundamental for achieving outcomes.

12. Take up of FEEE

Take up of Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) by children with SEN and disabilities is significantly lower than typically developing children.¹¹ There are a plethora of reasons for this but an important one is due to lack of confidence from parents in settings being able to provide for their child's needs. Take up rates of FEEE for all children have returned to where they were before the pandemic with 72% of eligible 2-year-olds registered for a funded childcare place in 2022¹², nevertheless from our conversations with professionals, parents and researchers, children requiring additional support are increasingly losing out on access to quality education. This takes the form of 'backdoor' exclusions, or in other words, parents being told by settings they can't meet their needs, children being turned away, or reduced timetables, with some children only being present at a setting for one hour a day or less. Reduced timetables are only used as an exceptional measure, when appropriate, when all other measures to support the child have failed and that they are kept under regular review.

Obtaining concrete data on children being turned away and reduced timetables is not straightforward as this is relatively underreported. What we do know is less than one in five (18%) local authorities in England report sufficient childcare for children with disabilities, a 3% decrease on 2022¹³. In addition, 43% of local authorities across Great Britain report that some or many of their local childcare providers have reduced the number of funded early education entitlement places they can provide. If children with SEN and disabilities are not able to access education in the earliest years, this can have long-term repercussions on their educational experiences in the future. Children with SEN and disabilities are twice as likely as their peers to enter reception class not knowing anyone from pre-school, which makes them more prone to having a lonelier time at school, as well as making their transition experience even more challenging.¹⁴

The EYSEND Partners are aware of these discrepancies and through various methods such as CDC's Equality Act training, increasing awareness of the importance of OAP, and transition work, we are trying to address some of these concerns. Through the Equality Act training, for example, we discuss the statutory duties to make reasonable adjustments and draw the link between blanket policies and discrimination based upon disabilities. Through the strategic support, we work with settings and schools to collectively devise realistic ways they can enhance provision considering lack of resources and staffing. Leicestershire, for example, plan to create bitesize videos for parents to help them understand the longer-term impact on children's educational experiences if they have limited attendance at nursery/school in the early years.

¹¹ Levelling the Playing Field study, 2015, CDC & Partners [\[Link\]](#)

¹² Ofsted Annual Report 2021-22 [\[Link\]](#)

¹³ Childcare Survey, Coram, 2022 [\[Link\]](#)

¹⁴ Inequalities in the experience of early education in England, 2019, LSE [\[Link\]](#)

13. Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite the complex backdrop of mounting pressures facing the sector, it is evident that the EYSEND Partnership continues to achieve its aim of improving access and inclusion for children with SEN and Disabilities in the early years. The dynamic offer of training, resources and more targeted strategic support enables all Partners to work across the early years spectrum. Locally owned work developed by a range of different stakeholders, is then implemented on the ground with case study examples of children having their needs met and feeling positive about attending their schools and settings. A recent ONS report shows us that early identification of SEN and implementing the right support in the earliest years was crucial for a teenager with an EHCP's ability to achieve his goals in later schooling life¹⁵. Though difficult to measure, the support now put in place for young children will pave the way for a fulfilling educational journey.

Wider sector challenges such as retention and recruitment inevitably affect the progress that LAs can make with their inclusive strategies. This requires bringing stakeholders back together to re-establish outcomes and outputs to better reflect the current climate they are working within. In areas where data and evidence are missing or limited, greater focus is required on setting up the programme from the start with clear parameters on how impact will be measured in the longer term.

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;

¹⁵ Educational experiences of young people with SEN and disabilities in England, ONS, 2022 [[Link](#)]



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 process;
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.

14. Appendices

Appendix 1: EYSEND CASE STUDY - ROCHDALE & ORDINARILY AVAILABLE PROVISION

Rochdale Area SENCO Team are developing clear and transparent authority-wide to establish a local offer of ordinarily available provision universally provided in all early years settings; it is in place for all Private and Voluntary Institutions (PVIs). The system is web based and simple for practitioners to access and to use in their day-to-day work with very young children.

Planned outcomes

Rochdale established a set of key outcomes it wanted to achieve with the new system:

- A strength-based model based on stage not age which is focused on the development of the individual child, where they are and the next steps in their learning rather than where they should be at a particular age. A positive model – not a deficit model
- Earlier identification of need and earlier intervention
- Provision of targeted support for children who need it at the right time and where it is needed
- Better equipped and supported practitioners
- Improved partnership working between parents and carers with their child's setting in relation to their child's learning and support

Work began in August 2021. As a first step Rochdale Area SENCO Team looked at approaches being taken in other LAs and drew on support from the Council for Disabled Children, through its Early Years SEND programme to help organise their ideas. They took an early decision not to try and import a system developed elsewhere but to focus instead on building their own system tailored to their specific context and needs and the outcomes they wished to achieve.

The team worked with a small working group of SENCOs who were qualified to Level 3 of the national SENCO award before bringing in views from the wider SENCO workforce and settings - in person and through email. They also drew on support from other relevant local professionals such as the Rochdale Additional Needs Service, the Council for Disabled Children, Educational Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy, Children's Centres and Early Support Key Worker teams.

The work produced:

- An overview of typical developmental milestones from birth to school (EYFS)
- An easy-to-use tool in accessible language and format for practitioners to use with parents/carers to assess where a child is currently in their development - with strategies and suggestions that can be used to encourage their next steps as part of ordinarily available provision without the need to refer to targeted or specialist services.
- The assessment and review tool covers four broad areas of development Communication, Social and Emotional, Physical and Thinking.



- It is parent/carers friendly to promote home and setting partnership working and is a positive model based on stage **not** age

The tool with its supporting resources and strategies can be accessed by early years practitioners on the Our Rochdale Area SENCO Page in the Local Offer. Settings received training on the new system, where to find information and resources and on use of the assessment and review tool.

A delay in learning and development in the early years may or may not indicate that a child has SEN. Where there are concerns, the tool supports practitioners in making an initial assessment and in reviewing it regularly. It enables settings to establish for individual children who are not making progress, a clear definition of their level of need which can then be matched to the right level of support.

More generally, the tool has improved the quality of ordinarily available universal provision across settings, enabling support to be provided earlier while recognising that targeted support (eg, from an Area SENCo) may be needed for some children and specialist support through an Education, Health and Care needs assessment and provision for others.

Impact

Developing a new system is time consuming and pressures of day-to-day work on Rochdale's Area SENCo Team and on the SENCOs involved presented challenges. But the enthusiasm of settings and the careful, collaborative approach taken to develop the new system paid off.

It is early days in the operation of the new system. But evidence to date, including feedback sought from settings and Area SENCOs and parents/carers, shows that the outcomes sought at the outset are being achieved. It has improved:

- practitioners' expertise and confidence in identifying children's needs and adopting a range of approaches to meeting them.
- the quality of ordinarily available provision across settings
- information for and engagement with parents/carers and other professionals in relation to individual children's needs, the interventions used to support them, and the progress that has been made/or not made over time
- the referral pathway for targeted support and reduced the level of referrals for such support, enabling the input of professionals providing targeted and specialist support to be focused on those children who need it. Figures show a reduction of referrals year on year between 2021 /22 and 2022/23:

	<u>2021/22</u>	<u>2022/23</u>
September	29	19
October	67	16
November	33	20
December	17	2

January	30	21
February	32	30

208

108

This is a typical response from a setting:

The ordinarily available provision (OAP) assessment and review tool has had a positive impact. Sharing the document alongside strategies with the parents, in a clear way, has enabled them to be more open to accepting help for their children and better able to feedback during review meetings. The parents are more open with us about what the children are like at home, including showing us some videos. Mum has asked us in her feedback comments to try some different strategies as she knows her children best and as this is all recorded it's very clear. Without the OAP we would have made a referral to SENCo for both children, but it would have taken a while as parents were hesitant. Now we feel a referral isn't needed. However, should we have needed the referral, mum would be less hesitant as she is more informed. We intend to use it more often before making the step of referrals, we feel it's both practitioner and parent friendly.

The intervention record is fantastic. We're going to use it with parents to support all children. It is a great, easy way of showing them their child's milestones, rather than going through the bigger documents that can be somewhat over whelming. Having the activities on hand to give them will be so beneficial.

The Our Rochdale new practitioner log in is AMAZING! It makes everything run a little bit smoother. The intervention record went down really well the other practitioners using the tool.

Parents have enjoyed using this and working on the same outcomes at home and coming back together with the sheet to discuss what they feel is working and not working. Parents enjoyed looking through the ranges and sharing what the child struggles with at home.

Next steps

Rochdale is developing parent friendly additional resources for settings to use with parents/carers, sharing new strategies and skills which they can use at home. Rochdale is continually seeking and reviewing feedback from them to improve support for home learning.

The voice of the child is captured and recorded as part of their intervention record. This is enabling settings to use information about the child's strengths, areas of interest and preferences in planning and delivering interventions.

Links to web pages for the new system are embedded in the local authority's communication strategy and the steering group (mentioned above) is being widened to include representatives of all types of setting, developing closer links with and involvement of local services, including health and non-early years settings such as Children's Centres. Eventually Rochdale intends that there will be one system ranging from early years through to post 16. More broadly, It is also looking to establish a steering group of settings, parents/carers and professionals from a range of disciplines



across education, health and care to consider how to promote consistency in relation to arrangements for ordinarily available provision in Rochdale and Greater Manchester.



Appendix 2: EYSEND CASE STUDY - YORK & COPRODUCTION AND PARENT ENGAGEMENT

York has moved from consulting parents and carers to fully engaging them as partners with professionals in the co-production of plans, services and support for children and young people with SEN and disabilities.

In 2019 an Ofsted/CQC LA SEND review identified embedding strategic co-production in its approach to improving outcomes for children and young people with SEN and disabilities as a key area for development.

By the time of a re-inspection in 2022 co-production had been recognised as a strength of the LA's practice. While developments have not been confined to early years, developments in that area have given impetus to the work.

Outcomes

At the outset York established a broad set of outcomes they wanted to achieve:

- Co-production to be meaningful and purposeful
- All parents to see the value of working in partnership with professionals and services and want to be involved
- Local partners to actively engage with families of children of all ages
- Every programme, project or change undertaken to be developed in partnership from the start
- All schools and settings to prioritise co-production as the way of working

Action

This vision led to the development of York's Joint Partnership Model which now guides action at strategic and operational levels.

York uses the term Joint Partnership rather than co-production as this was felt to be more likely to be recognised and understood and to encourage children, young people and families in particular to engage.

In establishing its Joint Partnership arrangements York involved as partners:

- Children and young people
- Parents and carers
- Voluntary sector organisations
- City of York Council – education and care services
- Early years settings, schools and academies
- Health services



- Elected members

Joint partnership working has been wide ranging in practice. In their 2022 report Ofsted and CQC highlight the LA's Outcomes Framework as a particular example which has improved the measurement of outcomes achieved by children and young people. Children, young people, parents and carers and the City of York Council's SEN Team has worked in partnership to create a new format for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) which are now written in jargon free plain language so they are easier to understand. Importantly, new EHCPs are produced through joint partnership working.

York worked with Contact, a voluntary sector organisation supporting families of disabled children and young people, and the local Parent Carer Forum, to help shape their approach to co-production in the early years and identify priorities for action. The LA then identified in a follow up session that their next steps in achieving their goals should focus on staff/practitioner understanding of joint partnership working (co-production) in the early years. Training has been undertaken for SENCOs in early years settings and for those practitioners who lead on the Early Talk Programme for York which is giving professionals and families the tools they need to support children with their speech and language development in the formative years of life. York believes that this would enable better outcomes for children in the early years and beyond that for children and young people more generally.

Training has also drawn on existing good practice taking place across the city such as 'stay and play sessions', coffee mornings for families to chat with practitioners, communication throughout the day, sharing of resources and supporting families to complete tasks at home to improve outcomes for their children.

Impact

York's model of joint partnership has had a positive impact on the confidence of parents and carers. It has enabled professionals across education, health and care services to feel confident in embedding co-production in their work. And children and young people say they enjoy being fully involved in decisions.

Measuring impact of joint partnership working has been a strong focus in York. Surveys and conversations with parent carers, children and young people have shown that the focus on joint partnership working has made a difference:

- "engagement through all of this has been so uplifting compared to where it was 4 years ago"
- "thank you, this is the most positive I have felt in the last 4 or so years"
- "I do feel this is the start of it and we will get families back on board and engaging with us"



- "All of this is fantastic and positive, I attend a lot of meetings and I see this being a positive change"
- 'It makes me feel listened to and it allows me to visualise and have an understanding of some of the people who make key decisions that affect my child's journey.'

Despite facing challenges in gathering consistent numbers of responses to surveys York are continuing to focus on gathering evidence of impact and meaningful feedback. They will begin to implement the Measuring Success Toolkit.

The Toolkit is based on a four cornerstones approach to build trust among partners:

- (1) Welcome and Care
- (2) Value and include
- (3) Communicate
- (4) Work in partnership

The Toolkit includes tangible, practical measures enabling partners to gauge success in each of the cornerstones. It is designed to strengthen inclusive practice and promote emotional health and well-being within the ethos and culture of settings and schools

Challenges and next steps

York have faced some challenges throughout their journey including engaging with the wider cohorts of families and gathering feedback consistently from high number. However, the strong relationship they have with their Parent Carer Forum means they are able to address and put plans in place to improve these areas of weakness.

The parent carer forum feedback that families can often feel exhausted from too much engagement and often sessions or focus groups are held at inconvenient locations or times, therefore changes have been made to work in times and locations that suite majority of families. In addition, York's Participation and Engagement Officer is attending events and parent groups to gain feedback from families in comfortable environments whereby families already are rather than expecting them to travel or make alternative arrangements just to share their views.

The LA has identified a number of next steps to further develop its work on co-production. These include:

- Widening engagement of all families in the early years
- Supporting practitioners and settings to understand joint partnership
- Developing an Inclusion Charter for settings and schools
- Encouraging partners who would not ordinarily engage with early years settings on improvement/development work to do so



- Undertaking some specific early years focused projects to engage families
- Getting a better understanding of the impact of work undertaken in order to promote continuing improvements



Appendix 3: EYSEND CASE STUDY – BRISTOL & TRANSITION TO SCHOOL

Bristol have taken forward work focused on improving the transitions children with special educational needs and disabilities make from early years settings to Reception.

Bristol's Early Years Inclusion Team first sought the views of early years settings, schools, educational psychologists, early years speech and language therapists and other health and social care professionals and parents on what was working well and what needed to improve. The views and evidence they collected informed how they approached their work.

The consultation highlighted good practice in both early years settings and schools in their support of good transitions (see Impact, below). However, this was not consistent across the city and the team identified the need to clearly establish roles and responsibilities for early years settings and schools.

Funding was obtained to appoint an additional member of staff from summer 2022 and this gave impetus to the work.

Outcomes

The outcomes sought at the start of the work were:

- All schools and early years settings with a clear understanding of what is required in order to secure successful transitions
- Better planning from early years settings and schools to support transitions
- Improved confidence among staff in schools and early years settings in preparing for transitions and sustaining placements in schools
- Improved outcomes for children, including fewer absences and exclusions and improvements in well-being

The team decided to develop comprehensive guidance as a key means of supporting better transitions for early years settings and schools.

The guidance the team developed addresses the need for earlier planning and preparation. It sets out key principles governing effective transitions and promotes the aim of ensuring every child has a comprehensive plan for transition. The guidance is supplemented by a Transition Timeline containing key dates and responsibilities and action to be undertaken by settings and schools at each point from the autumn prior to transition to the following autumn. It sets out action that should be taken for all children AND for additional action that should be taken for some children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, who require additional and/or different support. The timeline includes a range of practical strategies and approaches that can be employed to support successful transitions. As well as setting out clear expectations for early years settings and schools the timeline can be used to support reflective discussions and auditing of current practice and provision to promote improvements.



An online Early Years Portal, accessible by all settings, contains details of the children whose parents have accepted places at particular schools, enabling settings and schools to be in touch and start to develop a plan for transition much earlier than previously. Where particular needs have been identified (for example toileting or eating) advice and support, including training for staff, can be put in place well before the child starts in Reception.

In Bristol the multi-agency Early Years SEN Panel allocates funding to early years settings to enable them to ensure children with SEND are able to access their early education placement and to make progress within identified areas of need. If a nursery age child has been funded by the Panel, that funding will go with the child to their school and be maintained for a year, after which a review will take place before the following May. This supports continuity and consistency of approach across early years settings and schools – a key principle of Bristol's Early Years Transition Guidance.

Impact

The guidance and support system has been in operation for a relatively short time and a review of its effectiveness is under way to assess its impact. The following is an example of practice which informed its development. It illustrates the impact sought from widespread implementation.

'Jemima was a looked after child who started with our setting in January when she was two. She had a range of traumatic early life experiences and was being cared for by her grandmother. Staff from the setting visited Jemima in her home and supported her and her grandmother as she started with us. Jemima found it difficult to regulate and manage her emotions and behaviour and respond to boundaries and routines. We explained and shared with her grandmother the strategies we were using with Jemima and sought, with her agreement, advice from the inclusion team following which we put in place a support plan and applied for additional funding. Jemima's grandmother did not have a network of support to draw upon and we supported her as she began to look at schools for Jemima and with the paperwork applying for her school place.'

Transition process: Late April. 'Once the school places had been allocated our SENCo, with the agreement of Jemima's grandmother, phoned the school and explained that Jemima would need an enhanced transition process. The SENCo explained Jemima's current level of support at our setting and suggested visits from the school to enable them to see the strategies we were using. In May the school's SENCo and head teacher came to observe Jemima and the interventions we were using. They were able to see Jemima within her free play and ask questions. A transition meeting was held at the school in June attended by our SENCo and Jemima's support staff, her grandmother, the school's SENCo, the new class teacher and support staff. During the meeting we talked through the enhanced transition pack and support information, answered any worries or questions that Jemima's grandmother had and talked about how the settling in process may work for Jemima. The following day the class teacher came to our setting to visit all children we were transferring to the school, including Jemima. Staff who would be supporting Jemima at school visited again a few days later to play alongside Jemima and observe and chat to our staff. A few



days after that support staff from pre-school accompanied Jemima to school for settling in visit and story time.'

School perspective: "I felt really supported by the pre-school. They really were open to us coming to visit more than once and what they showed us was a true impression of how Jemima could be - rather than saying it's all fine. We know that our working together was really beneficial for Jemima's grandmother - it really helped the whole process for Jemima that we had good communication and transfer."

Pre-school view: "The school really listened to us about our experience and concerns and treated us as professionals. It really felt like we were working together and sharing information to make the transition as smooth as possible. The school really invested in the transition process. Jemima's school let her previous setting know she had settled well and her grandmother dropped in to the setting to share that Jemima was doing well with her reading and despite moving to a new house, she had chosen to keep her there because of how well she had settled and was getting on."



APPENDIX 4: EYSEND CASE STUDY: NORTH NORTHANTS – DEVELOPING A WHOLE SETTING APPROACH

Northamptonshire County Council's work to develop a whole setting approach to supporting children in the early years with SEN and disabilities builds on previous work with nasen to improve provision in the early years. It is taking place in the context of a reorganisation in April 2021 of Northamptonshire into two new unitary authorities -West Northants and North Northants.

Planned Outcomes

The LA set out some key priorities for their work at the outset:

- All young children in the early years to have their needs identified early and be provided with appropriate support in their setting
- A reduction in escalation to specialist support services
- Staff in settings to have the knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence to identify and support children with SEN and disabilities
- Partnership working within the LA and between the LA and external partners to be strengthened, focusing on children's transitions

Key features

In 2020 the LA was part of a project with nasen to improve training and professional development of staff working in early years settings, which had earlier trained SENCOs to level three of the national SENCo award. Some 22 settings took part in online training and 11 of those went on to participate in quality assurance of their self-review process. The self-reviews focused on areas identified by individual settings as priorities for development and the process was developmental, encouraging reflection and targeted planning for the future. The quality assurance process brought together a range of teams with meetings involving the School Improvement Team, the Early Education and Childcare Team and the Specialist Support Services Team facilitated by nasen.

The development of strategic links between all the services involved in supporting provision for early years through the Specialist Action Learning Sets (SALS) grew out of the project and this has helped to sustain and maintain its impact. Regular meetings of SALS bring together the leads for School Improvement, Early Years, Specialist Support Services, Educational Psychology, Local Offer, SENDIASS, Health Visiting and other health services including the Speech and Language Therapy Service, Early Help and involve direct input from SENCOs, Northamptonshire County Council's Strong Start Team and other practitioners.

Impact

The project had the following impact:

Practitioners



- As part of a longitudinal study for the DfE, SENCoS shared how the project had impacted positively on their setting and specifically on practitioners. SENCoS reported how confident they felt in delivering in-house training and how the training had made a positive difference to the competence and confidence of all staff. This has been recognised by external agencies such as Educational Psychologists. SENCoS shared how all staff are now part of the SEND processes; this is no longer the exclusive province of the SENCo. SENCoS described how, as a result of the project, they have successfully completed applications for high needs funding, made requests for statutory Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessments and conducted EHC Plan reviews. One setting has been awarded an outstanding judgement by Ofsted and their work with children with SEND was explicitly praised.

LA

- The early years PVI sector has been given more a voice by the inclusion of a SENCo as part of the strategic SALS meetings. The SENCo offers the local authority a rich and relevant perspective on what is happening 'on the ground'. The four SENCoS (cohort 1) attended SALS 3 and provided useful evidence about the impact of the reviews on their settings and stakeholders.
- The work built on previous successful SEND work and by having strategic leaders on board, teams were able to share in the broader picture of SEND across the LA.
- The Early Years SEND review project enabled the local authority to introduce a reflective process to settings across the county. SENCoS fed back how they welcomed the review as a way of changing cultures. Settings reported that the reviews helped to broaden their focus from COVID to setting improvement and 'business as usual'.

Multi-agency working

- The SALS provided a good opportunity to further strengthen multi-agency working at a vital time – during the COVID pandemic and a restructuring within the local authority/disaggregation into two new local authorities. As new teams joined the SALS meetings, they were updated on changes and this helped professionals to better promote and signpost settings and families to a range of services. In the longitudinal study for the DfE SENCoS described how, following their SEND reviews, they reviewed and adapted transition processes and partnerships with parents, including the parent voice more effectively.

Children and families

- SENCoS reported how the project impacted positively on children and their families. Settings view themselves as more inclusive and this has benefitted all children. Children with SEN and disabilities have access to broader experiences, benefit from earlier identification and intervention and are flourishing with the support they now have.
- SENCoS report that parents/carers are more involved in their children's learning. A parent interviewed as part of the project described the way in which her child's setting had fully



supported her child's complex needs and worked closely to ensure continuity of arrangements/provision, for example supporting home learning by providing duplicate activities for the child to complete at home. A holistic family approach was taken; the setting used pictures of the child's sister showing different emotions to support the child in recognising and self-regulating her own emotions and behaviour while she was in the setting.

Challenges and next steps

Pressures on staff from the impact of COVID affected the work. Conducting the self-review process online helped to address this. Continuing the momentum of the work once services were disaggregated following reorganisation of the local authorities presented challenges. But the passion and commitment of staff in settings and LA teams and services were key to addressing this. The support from the Senior Leadership Team has been vital in helping to maintain momentum, as has the involvement of nasen.

The work to develop a whole setting approach to SEN and disability has enabled professional dialogue between teams to continue and shape the work moving forward. Since the work a further group of settings in North Northamptonshire has completed SEND reviews and there is an agreed aim to continue to use nasen's review guide as a tool to disseminate and share practice with SENCos across PVI settings. The LA aims to sustain impact through continued strong strategic engagement across services. Future plans include developing links between early years settings and the planned Family Hubs, particularly in respect of home learning.



APPENDIX 5: EYSEND CASE STUDY - PLYMOUTH & A WHOLE SETTING APPROACH TO SEND

Plymouth local authority is working with a number of PVI early years settings, using the Early Years SEND review tool, to develop a whole setting approach to SEND. This is enabling sector led improvement in the quality of universal early years provision through a better skilled workforce, earlier identification of children's needs and more effective support.

Places on training from nasen on using the SEND Review Tool have been offered to settings. All places offered have been taken up. Termly Early Years SENCO briefings have been reinstated following a hiatus during COVID restrictions. Sessions were attended mostly by SENCOs but have been recorded and made available to those unable to attend (eg Childminders).

An initial cohort of around 25 settings successfully used the EYSEND Review Tool in 2021 to audit and evaluate their provision. A second cohort of a further 9 settings have now used the Self-review tool in 2021/2022 and are part of the programme. Two network meetings for Early Years settings were held in 2021 and 2022. Plymouth has shared its approach and the outcomes achieved with other LAs.

A range of partners has been involved in the work including early years settings, the local authority Early Years, SEND and Disability teams, the local SENDIASS, Health teams, Speech and Language Therapy and Additional Needs Advisors. Through development of stronger links with SENDIASS and other organisations, parents and carers and organisations representing them have had a stronger voice in taking forward developments.

A number of key factors enabled the development of Plymouth's whole setting approach to SEND:

- the firm basis of skills within a group of Level 3 trained SENCOs allied to a high level of enthusiasm for change in the early years workforce, particularly among SENCOs
- the enthusiasm and commitment of early years staff to be part of a positive programme for change following breaks in provision during COVID restrictions
- a common objective in settings and the Early Years and SEND teams to improve the quality of universal provision.

Staff turnover was a key challenge. A number of staff left the authority during or after COVID restrictions. It was difficult for settings to take on work to develop a whole setting approach while coping with day-to-day pressures and disruption brought about by COVID and COVID restrictions. A strong core team of local authority Early Years and SEND teams and SENCOs in settings with the drive and determination to succeed ensured that settings experienced the review process as engaging and interactive and staff regarded it as a valuable continuing professional development opportunity.



Impact

On settings

Evidence reported by settings shows how the EYSEND review tool has enabled them to identify areas where staff lacked confidence and take action to address those through training and the development of practical resources. Staff have a more positive relationship with SENCOs, welcome their support and advice and report improved confidence in identifying and supporting children's needs and in having difficult conversations with parents. The SENCO role is working more effectively in settings and clear connections are being made between settings' practice and the Plymouth Early Years Graduated Approach to Inclusion.

On parents and carers

SENCO evaluations show that parents report a better understanding of their child's needs as a result of staff sharing interventions as part of Individual Education Plan reviews and other meetings and through more partnership working with their child's setting. Parents report that they are now aware of who in the setting to approach if they have concerns about their child. They also have greater awareness of organisations which can help them such as the local SENDIASS, the health visiting team and know how to get information through the Local Offer.

On the quality of local provision

Training of staff through the programme has brought greater consistency in settings practice in identifying children's needs. Outcomes have improved as strategies are better aimed at meeting children's individual needs and interests, raising the quality of universal early years provision in the area.

The success of the SEND reviewers has been shared throughout the early years sector through weekly e bulletins and Early Years SENCO briefings. An experienced SEND Reviewer is hosting visits to PVI settings in the programme to help other early years settings in developing their own provision. This will help to broaden the impact of the programme across the LA.

On local policy and strategy

At leadership level, Plymouth's SEND Strategy Board has been engaged in the work from the outset. The board has been impressed with the success of the programme and the outcomes being achieved. Building on the work undertaken so far, action plans are now being drawn up for the local Early Years Strategic Board on strengthening Plymouth's Graduated Approach to Inclusion, developing an Inclusion Charter, improving transitions between settings and securing the most effective use of available funding and resources. These action plans will inform wider local policy and practice and help to further improve outcomes for young children with SEN and disabilities and their families.



APPENDIX 6: NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE LONG TERM IMPACT REPORT

At the beginning of the project (March 2020), Northamptonshire County Council had 2 priorities: early intervention for children with SEND to reduce the escalation of needs to specialist services and to continue to upskill the Early Years workforce in effectively supporting children with SEND.

- SEND reviewer training – focus on three sections (leadership of SEND, working with parents of children with SEND and Outcomes and quality of teaching and learning for children with SEND). LA officers attended 11 review meetings to QA. (22 attended online training)
- SALS support – strategic meetings (x3 over the year), attended by between 8 and 14 representatives from a wide range of LA and outside agencies including representatives from PVI settings.

Impact of SEND reviewer project

11 settings were contacted to provide longitudinal evidence of the impact of this project. 5 settings provided detailed feedback with two settings providing additional case studies. 1 parent of a child with a SEND attending one of the settings at the time of the project agreed to be interviewed.

Impact on practitioners

All the settings spoke passionately about the impact of the SEND reviewer project on themselves as SENCOs, the key people and the settings as a whole:

"As the manager of the setting, it has impacted the way I look at all children with additional needs. whether that be the children with a diagnosis or a child with slight language difficulties. It has impacted the keypersons, by developing the way they plan for individual children. As the manager of the setting, it has impacted the way I look at all children with additional needs. whether that be the children with a diagnosis or a child with slight language difficulties".

"I have become more confident in training the staff and working with them to help them identify and plan for interventions and children with SEN. Staff are more confident and find approaching me (as SENCO) easier. We have had lots of compliments from 3 different Educational Psychologists and other external professionals about our setting, staff and our progress with children with SEN".

"Practitioners are now being involved in the SEND review process, not just SENDCO. Raised awareness and professional dialogue forming part of regular meetings and training. Regular professional development in form of 'in the moment' conversations, training, and support. More awareness and professional curiosity about their practice and how this can support and impact on children with SEND".

"I feel as a whole team of professionals across the company there is more of an awareness of potential SEN, staff are recognising needs and using their skills and knowledge to enable reasonable adjustments to support each and every child. I have employed a 1:1 Sen support who I fund and who is there all the time to support both those children and myself as the accredited SENCO. I have supported the SEN support staff and keyworkers/ seniors through making referrals and they can now complete these with little support, I hope to get to the stage where they won't need me (the SENCO/provider) at all. Staff are on board with new training and interested in



embarking on SEN training themselves, and although I've always promoted this, I believe that as staff have been supported and confidence has developed, including them gaining experience as more and more children attend our setting with needs, this has encouraged them to want to develop in this area".

"Completing the SEND reviewer project has impacted on not only my personal professional development but it has enhanced my settings overall approach to SEND. Since the review we have successfully completed high needs applications and reviews, EHCP, completed medical training, and created coffee mornings to help support all families. We have worked with many different professionals and support cross county SEND support. We recently had our Ofsted inspection, and we were awarded outstanding. SEND is something I have always felt passionate about, but the review enabled me to look at the role more closely. SEND is everyone's responsibility and the review helped us to share out the role. My team are far more confident in identifying, gathering, and sharing information and providing support".

Impact on children

All the settings described the impact on the children with SEND and on other children in the setting:

"It has made the setting even more inclusive, so this has benefitted the children the special needs as well as the children who haven't. The new speech and language scheme, implemented as a result of the review has benefitted all children in the setting".

"Following the project, children are settled, and happy and early intervention and identification is much better and benefitting them more".

"Broadened experiences for children with SEND and access to education and care which they have a right to. More awareness and understanding for children with additional needs. Strengthened relationships with all children and practitioners. Enhance communication skills for all children".

"Children are developing well and are benefiting from the additional support and time given to these children and where it is needed. I feel that the support we are able to offer the children being a small setting with lower numbers has allowed the children with SEN to flourish, we have in turn gained the involvement of the parents/carers. They have then been supported. And working together holistically everyone has benefited. This school year, we are predominantly SEN as we have had families come to us through recommendation, which for us speaks volumes about the support we give our children".

Impact on families/parents of children with SEND

The settings described the changes in their approaches to transition and in strengthening the already strong partnerships with parents:

"Since the review, we have changed our transition arrangements for the children with SEND. We will make sure that the children and their parents have a meeting with the new receiving schools and also send one page profile with all children with additional needs".



"We have very good communications with our parents, and they are happy to discuss and chat with us. We offer more settling in sessions and allow parents to take the lead. We allow them to stay for as long as they wish and have an open-door policy".

"Following the review, we have stronger parent partnership including parent voice".

From the parent interview, one parent reported on how the setting supported her child's needs:

"The child is non-verbal, and the setting supported her communication needs. She was 'overwhelmed by other children' and could not tolerate the noise in the setting, covering her ears and moaning. The setting staff allowed her to remove herself from situations she could not tolerate. They supported her social interaction by developing her social skills, working on turn-taking and reducing her peer interactions to one child at a time. They created a workstation for the child, where she completed her daily activities from Portage and to begin to prepare her for school".

The setting worked closely with parents to provide continuity of arrangements/provision e.g., a practitioner attended a speech and language session alongside the child and parent. The setting provided activities for the parents to complete with the child at home. There was a holistic family approach taken; the setting used photos of the child's sister showing different emotions to support her self-regulation in the setting. The parent always felt that her views and wishes were taken into account and her voice was heard. The setting referred the child for an EHCP assessment and went through the process of securing an EHCP for the child. The parent had regular contact with the child's Key Person and the setting manager/ deputy manager throughout and felt that she could speak to any practitioner at the setting as they were all aware of her child's needs and current targets. In addition to daily face to face contact, the parent was contacted by email for and phone calls.

Although it was the parent who initially raised concerns about her child's development and instigated involvement by NHS services, she feels that her child was well supported by the setting in securing the best provision for her child. The child was subsequently diagnosed with ASD at 2 years old. She now has an EHCP and attends a special school.

Impact on LA

Northamptonshire disaggregated into two new local authorities in April 2021. The 'A whole setting approach to SEN and disability' project allowed for professional dialogue between teams to continue and shape the work moving forwards. Since the project a further group of settings in North Northamptonshire have completed SEND reviews and there is an agreed aim to continue to use the Nasen review guide as a tool to disseminate and share with SENCOs across PVI settings.



APPENDIX 7: EYSEND CASE STUDY - CORNWALL – SUPPORTING EARLY LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Cornwall has a sound basis from which to develop its early years provision with 97% of its 761 early years settings rated as Good or Outstanding by Ofsted in 2022 and high take up of free early years entitlements. Structures are in place for supporting children in the early years who have, or may have, special educational needs. Cornwall has a universal Education Effectiveness early years team and an Inclusion and SEND early years team which support children at 'setting support' and specialist levels. The Inclusion and SEND team operate through a tiered system to provide holistic support to settings and more specific support to those children likely to require an Education, Health and Care plan. Cornwall's Early Years Quality Improvement Support system enables planning of a targeted approach.

Early Language Development Programme

Given the central importance of speech, language and communication to learning and achievement Cornwall has partnered with Speech and Language UK to set up a programme of focused work on supporting children with early language delay and communication difficulties. The programme was intended for 3 and 4 year-olds but Cornwall recognised the need for support from the earliest stages and focused much of their work on 0-5 year olds. The local authority sees this as key in addressing two strategic priorities:

- improving educational outcomes for children in all early years settings, and
- reducing the gaps in educational attainment between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children achieving a good level of development at the early Years foundation stage.

Planned Outcomes

Cornwall set out some key outcomes they wanted to achieve from the work at the outset:

- All young children to have delays in early language development or difficulties with communication identified early and be provided with appropriate support
- Support for early language development to be integrated into the Ordinarily Available Provision of every setting as part of a universal offer
- Staff in settings to have the knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence to identify and support children with speech, language and communication difficulties
- Parents to feel confident that their child's needs will be identified early and met and that they will be supported with their child's home learning

Key features

Work to fully implement the programme started in Autumn 2022 following the successful recruitment of appropriate staff, including a full time dedicated Early Years Speech and Language Therapist and a Nursery Nurse specialising in speech, language and communication. Cornwall intend to make five further appointments to ensure each locality has a Nursery Nurse specialising in speech, language and communication.



At its heart Cornwall's early language programme uses an evidence-based Communication Tool from Speech and Language UK in every setting which consists of pictures of objects and situations to enable an assessment of speech and language to be made. It builds on the Early Language Identification Measure (ELIM) used by health Visitors at two-year check and guides staff on how to identify where and how children experience delays in developing language and difficulties they may have with communication. It also offers staff a range of practical approaches and interventions which are proven to be effective. Staff in every setting have been offered training in how to use the tool, as advised by Speech and Language UK, and settings are supported in implementing the programme by a range of local teams including Area SENDCos, Speech and Language Therapy, Child Development and Inclusion and SEND. The tool is used in schools, ensuring continuity across sectors.

Cornwall has developed a pathway for staff in settings to access additional advice through telephone, by email, and through direct consultation with Senior Area SENCos. This supports settings in implementing the programme and improving outcomes for children. An online Early Years Portal is being developed to enable the integrated two-year check between health and early years settings.

Impact

Data is being collected on the impact of the programme and its contribution to improving outcomes for children. Feedback to date from staff and parents is very encouraging:

'The support/strategy ideas and guidance have been beneficial to enable children to make progress. Our setting has been well supported by the Area SENDCo and Child Development Nursery Nurse. Their work has had a huge impact on key children and the progress they have made.'

'Our staff are happy to share learning and strategies with each other to support a whole setting approach. The Area SENDCo and Child Development Nursery Nurse have always ensured that our staff feel confident with delivering interventions they have suggested.'

'Support provided by staff from the Child Development Centre and Inclusion Team as well as the Early Years Speech and Language Therapist has not only supported us as a setting, they also support the families in a lovely holistic way!... This has really helped to quell anxieties and worries for both families and setting...'

'Parents have built sound relationships with all professionals involved which has also supported the needs of their children being met in setting and at home.'

'Our views are always listened to I think the communication is great both ways and we work very well together to get the support our daughter need, and we receive help for us as parents.'

'Without the support that's been in place for our child her progress wouldn't be happening... the words she is now starting to say wouldn't be happening and the interactions with children would be very limited....'



Challenges and next steps

Pressures on staff from day-to-day work, including the impact of COVID recovery, limited the time available for securing funds and appointing key staff to set up the early language programme. The enthusiasm of staff in settings and local teams has driven implementation, encouraging a shift in focus for Senior Area SENDCos from working with individual children to a more holistic role empowering staff to provide a whole setting approach. The programme links to other developments to improve ordinarily available provision which are enabling more children to have their needs met earlier and targeted and specialist support to be focused on those whose needs cannot be met in this way. They include work with settings and Family Hubs to improve home learning, improving transitions from early years settings to school, and multi-agency working with health, social care and Education Improvement Teams, bringing Cornwall's Early Years Strategy and its Early Years Safeguarding Strategy together to improve support for children who are not in settings.



APPENDIX 8: BRIGHTON AND HOVE CITY COUNCIL SUMMARY OF THE SPECIAL APPROACH TO MAKING IT REAL

November 2022 – March 2023

Children's Centres 2022-23 and Early Help SEND support

Raising Early Achievement in Literacy

Making it REAL.

The REAL approach has been embedded throughout the BHCC Children's Centres under-fives teams since 2020.

During Covid -19 this was delivered virtually in 1-1 and small groups across the city

Staff reported an increase of young children attending groups with possible SEND since lockdown restrictions lifted. Families attending groups are mainly referred by Health Visitors who are knowledgeable about the REAL approach and regularly refer families into the programme.

The REAL groups needed to be adapted to accommodate the wide range of presenting need.

NCB delivered further training to Childrens Centre, Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) and Brighton and Hove Inclusion Service (BHISS). This enabled staff to better adapt the approach when supporting children with SEND and to give more focused support to parents about the home learning environment

The most recent expression of interest with DFE/NCB was in Autumn 2022. This support from NCB allowed BHCC and partner agencies to look more strategically at the REAL approach for this group of families and work across new partnership organisations, and included the following:

Working with BHISS, EMAS and Seaside View Child Development (NHS) to better reach those families and target resource. This was achieved through NCB facilitated Action Learning sets x2 to identify gaps/challenges and agree an approach moving forward.

ALS x2 with 7 other LAs in the programme to share ideas and practice, attended by the Service Manager - Childrens Centres

ACTIONS agreed and completed at ALS.

Workshops for parents were facilitated by NCB for parents whose children attend our specialist nursery for children with SEND – The Jean Saunders Centre, groups in the Childrens Centre, or identified through PVI nurseries.



BHISS teachers supporting Early Years staff when planning REAL groups – this included a powerpoint/ video resource for practitioners which explains the REAL approach for SEND children. This has been shared within BHCC and will be used as a digital resource in Family Hubs from April 2023

Reviewing resources provided for SEND children and their families (each family attending a group or workshop receives a resource pack which contains equipment to support the 4 strands of literacy). Packs have now been adapted for SEND children.

BHCC staff are now working with Seaside View CDC providing weekly groups at Turner CC for children with multiple complex health and education needs. The groups are based on The REAL approach. We have committed to increasing these groups with the new service offer for Family Hubs

REAL Data – 2022/23

2 x NCB facilitated parent workshops – 26 parents attended across the two sessions, including 2 foster carers

Feedback from attendees

Brilliant. Thank you.

I am a Foster carer and feel that your training would be FAB for ALL our Under 5s carers. Mia and I came/were invited due to our children's additional medical and genetic and more obvious (!) needs but all that info would benefit ALL of our Foster children who are usually delayed or have the "SEN" of emotional and physical trauma and neglect. Do you do a training session for that and these carers?

Feedback from groups

I loved that my child started using some signing to communicate. She loved the messy play. We have enjoyed it lots!"

"We are doing more playing at home now, especially water play, the memory magic and sounds walks. It gave us lots of great ideas."

"He engaged with all the activities, especially he loved the book. He tells me the story all the time. I love that the activities were adapted to the child's needs and likes."

Groups

139 children and families have completed a four-week group during the time period, with overall distance travelled outcome data recorded for 131 of these, as follows:



A Lot Better	106
A Bit Better	18
No Change	7

Many of the children attending with SEND have only recently been identified by Health Visitors and are at the very start of the referral/assessment process, so do not have a formal SEND diagnosis.

Some families requested a space and time to meet in the centres to build social/support networks. We have been able to facilitate this and will continue to develop this during our transition to family hubs.

Jumpstart Nursery – council run nursery based in a Childrens Centre

Parent/carers groups started in Autumn 2022. They have been running twice each week. Take up has been sporadic but has recently improved at the midweek group with 7 families attending from the local community. Activities are planned to support children's early learning, based around the REAL approach, with a focus on communication, modelling play, and providing sensory activities.

EMAS group

EMAS and Childrens Centres delivered an additional REAL group for Bengali speaking families, with Bengali and English speaking staff. Staff were able to support SEND children in this group and we plan to run this again in the summer term 2023.

APPENDIX 9: EYSEND CUMBRIA LONG TERM IMPACT REPORT, DECEMBER 2022

Following Cumbria's SEND inspection and involvement at local level, Cumbria LA attended and joined the Early Years SEND Partnership approximately 4 years ago. As a participant in the EY SEND Partnership Project, regular information, training and newsletters have been shared widely across the county through both school and PVI comms and through SENCO networks and CPD opportunities for practitioners across the Early Years sector. The EY SEND Partnership has promoted inter LA working and networking to share innovative practice that has enabled reflection and evaluation of what happens across Cumbria. Involvement and actions identified through attending the Partnership meetings have informed work within Cumbria's Early Years Strategy to improve outcomes for children with SEND, and indeed, all children in the Early Years.

Key actions that have been developed from the partnership action plan include:

- Collection and collation of reliable data
- Early identification of need at SEND support
- Workforce development
- Parental engagement

These four broad areas have also included continued refresh of the Local Offer, review of funding streams and strengthened partnership working across Health, Inclusion and Early Years.

Currently in Cumbria, there are 330 children in Early Years open to the Area SENCOs through setting referral and there has been an increasing trend from 2021. There has been an increasing number of Early Years children referred for an EHCP assessment: in 2019 there were 288, and to date in 2022 there have been 384. At the same time, the quality of assessment requests has improved, due to the number of upskilled setting SENCOs who achieved the DfE funded Early Years L3 SENCO Award with nasen and SIL. However, following the upskilling of the setting SENCOs, there is evidence that some are now leaving the PVI sector to work in schools, where their skills are being used to support children with EHCPs, to support classes as teaching assistants or they are, unfortunately, leaving the sector altogether.

In 2019/2020, no child in Cumbria with an EHCP achieved the Good Level of Development, whereas the national GLD for children with an EHCP was 4.5%. In Cumbria 22.5% of children at SEN Support achieved GLD compared to the national rate of 28.9%. In 2020/2021 there was no statistical release or collection of GLD due to the pandemic. Statistical data for 2021/2022, although not directly comparable due to the implementation of the revised EYFS, shows there has been an increase in the number of children with an EHCP who have achieved a

GLD. This is now 3.8%. (Slightly higher than the national rate of 3.7%.) The number of children with SEN Support achieving GLD is 20.9% compared to the national rate of 22.9%, both of which have decreased.

	All Children	All Children	All Children	EHCP	EHCP	EHCP	SEN support	SEN support	SEN support	No SEND support	No SEND support	No SEND support	unknown	unknown	unknown
	Number of children	GLD %	AV Pt Score	Number of children	GLD %	AV Pt Score	Number of children	GLD %	AV Pt Score	Number of children	GLD %	AV Pt Score	Number of children	GLD %	AV Pt Score
National		65.2%	31.1		3.7%	19.5		22.9%	25.3		71.1%	31.9		50.2%	29.2
North West		61.7%	30.6		3.0%	19.1		19.6%	24.6		67.8%	31.5		38.5%	27.6
Cumbria	4800	61.3%	31.2	158	3.8%	20.4	278	20.9%	26.2	4173	66.5%	32	191	52.9%	30.3

As a result of Cumbria's EYFSP data, work now needs to be developed to reduce the gap for not only the lowest 20% of children but all children against the national outcomes and particularly for those children at SEN Support.

The county maximised opportunities to be involved in both Action Learning Sets offered and projects that were shared and delivered from the Partnership. Cumbria were successful in accessing the following projects:

- nasen Early Years SEND Reviewer training
- CDC – Transition
- PDP – Communication and Language
- ICAN (now Speech and Language UK) Speech and Language
- CDC Co-production
- CDC Ordinarily Available Provision (currently)

These projects enabled colleagues in the Early Years Team to work on a much wider basis with partners across the county who are also involved with children with SEND but also enabled projects to be delivered creatively to meet county needs. The projects have all helped to shape development of support for children with SEND in Cumbria, with the overall aim of increasing practitioner confidence, knowledge and understanding, enhancing networking opportunities, supporting conversations with parents/families particularly at the points of transition and ensuring SEND is on everyone's agenda.

Opportunities to access the different programmes enabled different members of the Early Years Team to access wider training and professional development for example, Dingley's Promise, ICAN (Speech and Language UK) and training for licensees. This has increased internal capacity to facilitate and develop further the support for setting SENCOs to improve everyday practice and provision – Refreshed SENCO Toolkit, Transition Toolkit, Speech and Language Pathway – all accessible through the Local Offer and Early Years website for practitioners, families and professionals.

As a result of the EY SEND Partnership support and work, CPD within schools for SENCO's and staff working with children in Early Years has been identified as an area for improvement. Recently, the opportunity to take part in nasen's Golden Key training for practitioners in the role of Key Person has been offered and is being taken up by colleagues in schools, as we identified a gap in access for those staff who are not SENCOs but who are directly supporting children in mainstream schools.

In Cumbria, SENCO network meetings take place each term and are free to attend. From Summer 2022, SENCOs from all Early Years settings have been invited to attend the Early Years network, along with Health representatives and Speech and Language colleagues. Area SENCO's have also supported input with the established school SENCO networks.

Numbers of PVI SENCOs who attended the EY SENCO network sessions are as follows:

Autumn 2021	Spring 2022	Summer 2022	Autumn 2022
73	130	121	70

Feedback from the sessions informs network opportunities in the following term's planning. For example, provision for autism had been raised by SENCOs as an area to improve and through the LA commitment to CPD three Area SENCOs have delivered the Autism Education Trust's, 'Good Autism Practice in Early Years' this term to over 100 SENCOs.

Practitioners new to the role of Early Years SENCO access CPD through Cumbria's bespoke programme, 'All Our Children', over a series of sessions

Autumn 2021	Spring/Summer 2022	Spring 2023
33	35	35 booked to attend

Additionally, through our annual setting visit process, bespoke CPD is offered to meet the needs of the setting, for example, supporting young children's behaviours, supporting new nursery managers with SEND processes, supporting SENCOs to write SEN support plans, and supporting SENCOs to lead TAF meetings. Alongside this, the Area SENCO advice line, though in its infancy, is seeing an increasing number of calls for advice and guidance. From the end of May to October 2022 there have been 41 calls for advice and guidance on a wide range of SEN queries. The aim of the advice line is to build confidence with everyday inclusive practice and, due to advice received, the LA has seen referrals submitted, accurate use of the Developmental Journal and EarlyHhelp assessments clearly reflecting needs.

Working with ICAN (Speech and Language UK) colleagues were able to develop and form a county working group to produce a refreshed Speech and Language Pathway and screening tool. This is now widely in place across the county and used to support children's varying needs, in partnership with Speech Therapists. This is evident in referrals to the Speech and Language Therapy Service and Area SENCOs who include the monitoring tool as part of the needs assessment for the child. Over 146 practitioners have accessed Early Talk Boost, Working with Under 3's or Talk Boost delivered by the LA trainers. After attending the EY SEND Partnership's ICAN training, three of the Early Years Area SENCOs became licensees and have continued to deliver training to schools and settings. As a continued commitment to improving Speech, Language and Communication in Cumbria, the LA has continued to fund the licences.

An area of continued concern as children returned to settings and schools was the low levels of communication and children with behaviour difficulties, identified through the EYFSP data and referrals to Speech and Language Therapists. Cumbria continue to do an annual survey of providers and this was clearly evident in their 2022's responses. As a result, Effective Communication Networks have been established to support schools and settings across the year. The half- termly networks are offered face to face in each area of the county and to date there are 61 practitioners accessing the networks. Participants have opportunities to share good practice, explore their current practice and seek peer to peer support, alongside an Area SENCO Facilitator and Speech and Language Therapist. Participants are feeding back about the developments they have made to practice and provision and, through the gap tasks, they are building their range of strategies to support the children in their settings.

During the pandemic, along with different ways of working to support SENCOs and children with SEND, Action Learning Sets were attended and accessed by a range of LA staff. Shared learning from other Local Authorities enabled us to reflect on systems already in place and to develop and refresh new support materials for the sector, for example the transition ALS sessions, work on the 2Year Old Check, Ordinarily Available Provision and co-production with parents. Cumbria was able to share with other local authorities work that has been developed in our county to help inform their action plans.

Another success countywide was the work with the Council for Disabled Children on the Transition Project. This project focussed on all children, parents and points of transition across the Early Years. A toolkit was developed including support for transition at different levels from universal to targeted transition, based on a 'Pyramid of Needs' approach, which was mirrored in the Speech and Language Pathway. Transition support for parents was included, as well as templates for the sharing of information specifically for children with SEND. Alongside all of these tools, briefing papers and webinars were produced to support Early Years practitioners. Providers continue to use these materials as children transfer from one provider to another, to ensure appropriate provision is put in place to support the child and the family.

On completion of the Early Years Ordinarily Available Provision multi-agency project, the document will be shared and implemented at a county level to further support early intervention. Not only has there been an increase in the numbers of young children being referred for additional support but also settings are informing LA Advisers that the percentage of children with some additional needs within their settings has increased. The document will include simple strategies to help settings (and parents) support these children. Once the Early Years OAP document is launched it will be accessible to all providers and will contain live links for further advice and strategies as well as a clear expectation of effective daily provision and practice.

Due to working with the EY SEND Partnership, Cumbria has accessed support and advice from organisations within the partnership to develop and deliver the projects listed above. The impact of this has been seen in the quality of referrals made for SEN support but also EHCP requests to assess. Currently in Cumbria there are 384 Early Years children with EHCP's in place.

One of the first projects Cumbria undertook as part of the EY SEND Partnership, was to offer Early Years SEND Reviewer training. This was accessed by a range of practitioners, many of whom have now left their posts and moved to alternative roles. Cumbria opted to include Area SENCOs as part of the review team to provide sustainability to the project and in partnership with an Area SENCO setting, SENCO reviewers have completed reviews. Unfortunately, due to the lack of funding to release staff, the impact of the pandemic and staffing recruitment and retention in Cumbria we have had to be creative in how we have used the SEN reviews. As part of our Early Years L3 SENCO Award, the SEND review paperwork is shared with the learners and they are expected to use the paperwork to support a review of their SEND practice

and provision either independently or with an Area SENCO. Previously we were able to fund some reviews to take place and a reviewer and LA reviewer completed them together. Through our annual setting visit, if SEND is identified as an area for development, a SEND review is offered. In this way we hope to continue to share the everyday expectations within a setting for children with SEND.

The report illustrates the high quality of SEND in settings where a reviewer has been trained and where the SENCO has attended the wide range of training opportunities available in the county to improve the outcomes for children with SEND, recognised in their Ofsted inspection. Managers have stated that their nurseries have made improvements to their provision for children with SEND since completing a review, their personal and staff knowledge has improved, they have developed action plans as a result of their review, the practitioners in the role of Key Person in the setting have felt supported by the SENCO and benefitted from actions identified.

Overall, being a member of the EY SEND Partnership Project has enabled us to be outward facing, to review what works well but to refresh and develop areas for improvement. External support has been valued and prompted internal discussions, reflection and evaluation. Moving forward, as the county goes through Local Government re-organisation, it is hoped that the good practice developed, will benefit and continue to improve outcomes for children in the two new Local Authorities and that participation in the Partnership will continue, including the links and connections with other Local Authorities.