SEND reform

- The underpinning principles of the SEND reforms are that the child and the family are at the heart of the provision, and that there is greater transparency and accountability for everyone involved.

- SEND Code of Practice (2014) makes it clear that children and families need to be supported in order to achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes.

- These principles aim to support joint working and commissioning across the Local Authority and Health Services in education, health and social care services in order to provide a more joined up approach and early identification and intervention for children with SEND.

- The new legislation emphasises the need for high quality provision for children with SEND, and places importance on proactively removing barriers to inclusive practice.
The Early Years Sector

- Expanded rapidly over the past two decades, and includes a diverse range of providers
- The smallest providers of early childcare and education are child minders
- Private, voluntary and independent (PVI) nurseries provide a huge variety of early years settings; including playgroups, pre-schools, day nurseries and independent schools
- The maintained sector comprises maintained early childcare and education in children’s centres, Nursery and Reception classes in primary or infant schools and maintained nursery schools
- Academies and Free Schools also include the Early Years, and more schools are taking two year olds under the new Local Authority duty to provide a part-time early education place for some disadvantaged 2 year olds, including those with SEND
The Early Years Sector

- All of these providers must adhere to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Guidance 2014 and the Equality Act 2010, as well as now have regard to the SEND Code of Practice 2014 if they receive funding from the Local Authority.
So what do the SEND reforms mean for the Early Years sector now?

- The principles of the SEND reforms are reflected in the principles of the EYFS and more broadly in good early years practice
- The idea of the child at the heart of our Early Years practice is a familiar one
- The EYFS Statutory Framework 2014 has as one of its overarching principles the ‘unique child’; and partnership working between practitioners and with parents is highlighted in its introductory section
- The child’s voice and participation are highlighted in the EYFS Characteristics of Effective Learning, and parents are involved at both an individual level in planning for their child
- At a more strategic level in parts of the Early Year sector, e.g. in voluntary playgroups which have strong parental involvement in their management committee
So what do the SEND reforms mean for the Early Years sector now?

- The foundations for good practice for children with SEND in the Early Years have been laid, but what support and structures do we need to put in place so that wherever a child with SEND accesses early care and education they experience high quality inclusive provision?
Workforce development - Early Years
SENCOs and practitioners

- Under the new SEND Code of Practice, the SENCO’s strategic role is strengthened
- There is an expectation that Early Years SENCOs will have a robust overview of the children with SEND in their setting and the interventions that are in place in order to meet these children’s needs
- In schools in the Early Years, this information has to be published on the school’s website as the SEN Information Report
- No such requirement for PVI providers or child minders, but the underlying principle remains the same
- Support and training from an Early Years Area SENCO team in order to fulfil these duties is vital if we want to build a strong Early Years SEND sector
Workforce development - Early Years
SENCOs and practitioners

- there is no SENCO qualification stipulated in the Early Years apart from in maintained nursery/primary schools
- an opportunity to use the new legislation as a frame of reference for developing a new SENCO qualification for the Early Years
- we could develop a raft of accredited training for SENCOs, beginning with a Level Four qualification, with the opportunity to progress to a Masters level qualification.
Early Years SENCOs

- We need to develop an understanding across the Early Years sector with managers and Heads that their SENCO needs regular weekly non-contact time in order to fulfil the duties of the post.
- If we truly want to embed early identification and intervention, we must give our SENCOs the requisite time to do so.
- Managers and Heads also need to support their SENCOs to gather information on their staff’s SEND training needs, so that this information can be fed into the setting’s development plan.
- At Local Authority level, we must ensure that appropriate training is offered to practitioners across the sector, identifying with the sector the areas of highest need.
Fostering joint working

- In the Early Years, good joint working practices already exist in Children’s Centres and their clusters
- What is needed now is stronger joint working across the Early Years education sector (across childminders, PVIs and maintained providers) and stronger joint working with other services, especially targeted and specialist Health Services
- Wider recognition needed amongst schools of the existing expertise in children’s centres around joint working
- In practice, schools could link in to existing children’s centre working arrangements, e.g. multi agency meetings; or providers could use existing links to build local networks of support for children with SEND
- A way of fostering joint working within the education sector is to run an Early Years SENCO Forum, which includes representation from all providers
The Local Offer

- Work needs to be done on how all Early Years Providers feed in to the Local Offer

- How all providers genuinely feel part of it, so that parents know that their child’s provision is linked to and part of a wider network of support for children with SEND

- Having the Local Offer as a regular, yearly item on the PVI forum agenda, with input from the person in the Local Authority who takes the lead on it, is an example of how PVIs could be linked in.
Funding for Children with SEND in the Early Years

- We need to ensure that any funding for children with SEND in the Early Years incentivises providers to build capacity in the sector to meet the needs of children with SEND and that it promotes joint working.

- Additional funding to enhance the provision for children who need something ‘additional to or different from’ the well differentiated universal Early Years provision is allocated through a termly multi-agency panel, which includes strong PVI and Children’s Centre representation.

- Service Level Agreements for Early Years provision should include conditions about staff training and SENCO qualifications.
The future?

- This is our opportunity in the Early Years to build on the existing strengths in different parts of the sector in order to provide equitable high quality inclusive provision for children with SEND
- Opportunities to extend specialism which exist in maintained nursery provision through the increase in places for 2 year olds
- Protect the role of the Area SENCO and where it does not exist, consider models of support which draw on a “forum” approach and consider working with existing SENCO networks where they exist
High Expectations

- The leaders of early years settings, schools and colleges should establish and maintain a culture of high expectations that expects those working with children and young people with SEN or disabilities to include them in all the opportunities available to other children and young people so they can achieve well.
What we do, every day

- In practical situations in everyday settings, the best early years settings, schools and colleges do what is necessary to enable children and young people to develop, learn, participate and achieve the best possible outcomes irrespective of whether that is through reasonable adjustments for a disabled child or young person or special educational provision for a child or young person with SEN.
“What makes a difference is that the nursery is part of the local community. They reach out to parents and if you come to them with any problems, they listen and they put strategies in place to overcome them”
Lorraine, Parent

“What makes a difference is multi-agency working, in the widest sense, including parents and carers, with the child at the heart of what we do”
Mary Isherwood, Headteacher
THANK YOU

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