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Peer support

Some of the early years settings that Family Action is working with have been engaging in peer support activities.



Different schemes

Since April 2015, Family Action's Childcare in Schools team has been supporting school-based childcare settings to:

- visit other early years settings, to learn from their inclusive practices for 0-5s with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- invite staff members from other settings to visit their provision to observe their practices and to offer practical and constructive advice and suggestions.

Examples of recent peer support opportunities, facilitated by Family Action, include the following:

- A group of eight childcare settings have visited a provider in Morecambe, where they: had a tour of the provision to meet and speak with staff; viewed resources and equipment; had an opportunity to develop a sensory area using cheap resources.
- Two settings in the Midlands have been engaging in regular staff swaps, to share expertise and learn from each other (eg around supporting children with complex medical needs).
- A setting in the Midlands has hosted professional development sessions to support other early years settings to develop their inclusive practices (eg Makaton taster session).
- A school in the North West visited another local setting to find out more about how to set up childcare provision as a charity.
- A setting in Essex visited a Midlands provider to offer advice and support around developing inclusion for young children with SEND.

- A children's centre in South London has visited an early years SEND base within a primary school to gain insights on supporting children with SEND.
- A private nursery in South London has visited a nursery based within a school to see how they arrange the layout of their setting and support children with SEND.

Benefits

Settings that have taken part in the different peer support activities (both as a mentor/mentee) have noted numerous benefits, such as the opportunity to:

- discuss challenges to offering an inclusive childcare environment
- share ways of overcoming such barriers
- reflect on one's own practice and consider ways of improving on current practice
- establish links with other settings that will continue beyond the length of the project.

Tips from other settings about engaging in peer support can be found in the 'Tips and templates' and 'Learn from others' sections of the Learning Exchange: www.learning-exchange.org.uk

Further information

- Family Action is funded by the Department for Education (DfE) to support school-based childcare providers with developing high-quality and inclusive childcare for 0-5s with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Find out more about the project, and download a wide range of free resources from: www.learning-exchange.org.uk
- Our Learning Exchange Facebook page gives links to events, suppliers, equipment, training and venues that might be of interest to school-based childcare providers: www.facebook.com/pages/Learning-Exchange/904749822892733?sk=timeline

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Registered charity in England and Wales no: 264713

Registered company limited by guarantee in England and Wales no: 01068186

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Last updated:
31.3.16

