

Working Together SEND Case Study

Ronald Openshaw Nursery Education Centre SEND Hub for Newham

The SEND Hub is a key partner in the Working Together Early Years Hub, which focuses on improving the quality of settings, increasing take-up of free early education for two-year olds, and supporting inclusion. One of the seven nursery schools that lead the Working Together Early Years Hub, Ronald Openshaw Nursery Education Centre (RONEC), has been the base for the early years SEND Hub for Newham since 2015.

All the nursery schools have a high proportion of children with SEND, as the local authority commissions high needs places for children aged 3-4 years, and the Early Years Hub plays a key role in implementing the borough's Best for All inclusion strategy. The SEND hub, including the two Local Authority Area SENCOs and a specialist Early Years practitioner, funded by the local authority, is based at RONEC and the team supports all the private, voluntary and independent settings and childminders in the borough. When the SEND Hub began there were only 10 children registered with SEND across the borough's 85 settings: with the introduction of more effective processes for recording SEND and support and guidance for identifying special needs, this figure has risen dramatically and last year alone saw 150 two year olds with SEND recorded as attending PVI settings.

The SEND Hub supports with all SEND needs in the non-maintained early years sector and has a particular focus on early intervention work with two-year olds who are showing signs of having SEND or may have been born with a disability. L. B. Newham initially followed the Department for Education's limited criteria for offering Free Early Education places for two year olds (FEE2) to children with SEND: Disability Living Allowance (DLA)/an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) – both of which may not be in place for two-year olds in the process of being diagnosed. Take-up of DLA in Newham has also been very low and the SEND hub has recently introduced Parent Workshops run by accredited parents with lived experience of children with SEND to address this through local children's centres, in addition to workshops provided by local authority support services and specialist Health Visitors. The Early Years Hub worked with the local authority to change the criteria to include children with SEND who have been referred by professionals.

The SEND Hub has set up a range of innovative projects to support children with SEND, their families and early years settings, to make progress. This work includes acknowledging needs, making referrals, supporting families through early diagnosis, navigating the pathway, and finding out what therapies and support are available. It includes the following:

- As early intervention is key the SEND Hub has supported the Local Authority SEND lead with plans for a Single Point of Entry (SPA) via Early Notification, and this is now the established route for support and intervention. This entails a core of information given by parents that does not need to be repeated, drawing together information in the format required for statutory assessment (EHCP) should this be relevant. The aim is to ensure that this is completed for all children by the time they transition to school, and to develop a consistent approach across the PVI sector to ensure that primary schools receive information on pupil progress in a consistent format that is moderated and reliable.
- The SEND hub has also been instrumental in the development of the Early Years Autism Pathway: from 2015 it has been warning of the rapid rise in diagnoses. As part of the Early Years Hub it has been working with Health, Support Services and Parent Representatives to bring together a coherent pathway for the local offer. This lengthy, and significant, piece of work is almost complete and will provide greater clarity for families and settings.

- The SEND Hub has established ‘Ready, Steady, Play’ sessions in four children’s centres, since many families are working full time so it can be difficult for them to access the SEND support they might need. Settings can refer families to these sessions where they can consult with the SEND Hub team on the best way forward for their child.
- For many families, access to Speech and Language Therapy is challenging so the Local Authority funds the SEND Hub to arrange a ‘buy-in’ of Speech and Language Therapy to support children who may have ‘fallen through the net’ and have been unable to access Newham’s Chatterbox language support. The Hub also provides direct training to settings.
- The development of Little Champions SEND (pan disability) Stay and Play at six children’s centres, with annual training days for Children’s Centre staff delivered by SEND Hub staff in conjunction with Speech and Language and Occupational therapists. These support parents to better understand the needs of their child.
- The SEND Hub has also developed ‘Connect With Me’, a ten week cross-sector Integrated Early Intervention model for children with Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) and Speech, Language and Communication Needs, for children attending PVI settings who have a diagnosis/are on a pathway for ASC. As well as providing specialist advice there is also a Family Support element which has been invaluable to parents as they process the implications of their child’s additional needs.
- The employment of a Children’s Centre Development Officer to support a more consistent SEND offer and utilise the wealth of parental expertise already available eg through DLA workshops. This work has now been taken up as part of the partnership with MENCAP and there is planned expansion into EHCP workshops and co-production.
- The roll out of EPAtS (Early Positive Approaches to Support) to build parent confidence and capacity to acknowledge their own feelings, support their children appropriately and, ultimately, run their own targeted workshops through the children’s centres. During 2019/20 the SEND Hub supported three children’s centres to run two EPAtS courses each (totalling 48 families). In 2020 a partnership with MENCAP to bring this course to an additional four settings was initiated but, sadly, has been put on hold due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

The SEND Hub builds on a range of SEND support initiatives in Newham, including targeted groups run by support services and children’s centres (for example, the Autism Spectrum Disorder support sessions at Kay Rowe nursery school) to extend accessibility. As part of the Early Years Hub new stay and play sessions for children with SEND have been set up, including the Buttercups sessions at Sheringham Nursery School.

The Local Authority SEND Hub staff keep their own professional development updated so they can provide training for PVI settings on:

- Complex needs and sensory play (50 practitioners)
- Cerebral Palsy (40)
- Down Syndrome (65)
- Promoting Positive Behaviour (30)
- SENCO Level 3 training for PVI settings funded by the DfE through the National Association for Special Educational Needs (NASEN).
- Autism awareness (120)
- Attention Bucket (112)
- Sign Along (70)
- Writing Support Plans (160)

The following numbers of PVI SENCOs have qualified in Newham to date:

	Autumn	Spring	Summer
2018/2019		23	21
2019/2020	21	21	
2020/2021	19		

We were delivering a course for childminders, funded by L.B. Newham, but this has had to be suspended due to the pandemic safe working guidelines.

- Communication Training inc. Every Child a Talker (with the Speech and Language Therapists) (70)
- Box Clever (80)
- Resource making (231)
- Little Champions Stay and Play Sessions for practitioners (30)
- Visual impairment (30)
- Hearing Impairment (12)
- Developing communication and play in children w. autism (50)
- Communication, Sensory and behaviour (270)
- ASD training (100 childminders)

The Area SENCOs find out how many two-year olds with SEND are accessing FEE2 places in PVI's across Newham and monitor take-up data for the Early Years Hub. In 2019/20 there were 150 two-year olds with SEND in PVI's and 60 in maintained nursery classes/schools. Of course, many of the two-year olds in PVI settings will enter maintained provision at three or four years, but some will remain in their setting until transfer to reception class. Our vision is that closer working between health and education at the point of the two-year old check will mean that every child who needs one will start school with a Support Plan in place.

The RONEC Head teacher represented the Early Years Hub on the Mayor's SEND Task and Finish Group at City Hall on transitions. This group looked at developing transition forms for children moving from a PVI setting into reception class. The Head reported that there had been a significant increase in good transition practice in Newham as a result of upskilling the PVI SENCOs through the NASEN Accreditation programme, funded by the Department for Education. The intensive training has improved outcomes for children across the board. From the date the Local Authority releases school place information, the PVI SENCOs initiate transition discussions with receiving schools and arrange transition visits for children, parents and staff to facilitate smoother and better-informed transitions for children with SEND.

Summary

The SEND Hub continues to:

- work within the Local Authority to ensure equality of opportunity for all children regardless of the type of provision they attend. This includes defining a clear pathway for identification, assessment and support.
- work with the Early Years Hub to ensure PVI settings and childminders can access the SEND support they need. This includes upskilling the workforce and supporting peer coaching partnerships between settings.
- work with MENCAP to develop a sustainable approach to supporting families by engaging parents to co-produce and manage change and share their expert 'lived' experience.
- provide opportunities for families to better understand the needs of their child and share this knowledge with their early year's settings.
- work with children's centres to ensure support for children with SEND at a local level, encouraging relationships to develop and connecting the most vulnerable members of society.
- champion early intervention as a key ingredient for success, ensuring two-year olds are at the heart of all we do.