

## **Early Years Services: Identification and Support for Children with Special Needs**

### **Early Identification**

In Southampton we identify most young children with significant and complex needs before the age of three, primarily through colleagues in health. A coordinated process of multi agency information sharing ensures a smooth transition from Southampton Community Healthcare to the city's Children's Services and Learning. This operates at two levels.

#### **1) Notification to the Local Authority by the Community Paediatric Team**

Reports on all young children known to have complex developmental or medical needs who may have SEN are sent to the Southampton Psychology Service. This information is documented in the form of a Request for Early Years Involvement which combines clinic reports with parental consent for the Local Authority to provide educational services and monitor the child's progress via the Early Years Review Group.

#### **2) Multi agency information sharing**

The Early Years Review Group meets monthly to discuss all children newly notified to the LA to identify their support needs. The group subsequently reviews each child's progress at an agreed interval to monitor early support and to ensure a smooth transition into an Early Years Setting.

### **Requests for Early Years Involvement**

The formal notification from Southampton Community Healthcare where children may have SEN is noted by the SEN team in Children's Services, as required by the SEN Code of Practice. However the planning of support provision is coordinated within Southampton Psychology Service. Currently there are 163 children on the Psychology Service Early Years data base. The main service provider for under 3's with SEN is Southampton Portage Service. They provide both a traditional Home Visiting Service and an innovative group provision for young children and their carers in collaboration with local Children's Centres. The Talk and Taste Groups aim to support children's communication and play skills. The number of young children with complex needs is growing in the city and early intervention has always been a priority. Southampton arranges for additional SEN support to be in place when children with significant and complex needs join Early Years Settings. Families of these children can identify their preferred placement at one of the 7 SEN funded Settings or they can select a Local SEN Support Package for their child. Specialist Nursery provision for children with complex physical and medical needs is available in Cedars School and Rosewood.

The Early Years SEN Admissions Panel considers children's SEN support needs in the term before the child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday. The Early Years SEN Panel meets twice a term. Identification of children's special needs is coordinated by a lead practitioner from Southampton Portage Service or by an Educational Psychologist or Early Years Support Teacher. The lead practitioner then reports to the multi agency Early Years SEN Admissions Panel. The operation of SEN support in Early Years Settings is described elsewhere.

Early Years Settings can also apply for additional support for children whose needs have not been known to the Early Years Review group.

### **Early Years Review Group**

This multi agency group meets monthly to act as an information sharing forum for children with SEN under the age of 3.

Current membership includes representatives from:

- Community Paediatrics,
- Wordsworth House Child Development Centre,
- Jigsaw,
- Southampton Portage Service,
- Southampton Psychology Service,
- Early Years Support Teachers,
- Health Visitors,
- Speech and Language Therapists,

The monthly meeting takes place at Cumberland House and is administered by Southampton Community Health Care. The group is chaired by the Consultant Community Paediatrician. Each meeting discusses the needs of new referrals and agrees a review date. The exit criterion is the child's successful transition to an Early Years Setting.

### **Professional Support to Early Years Settings**

Professional support for SEN is provided by 3 professional teams:

#### **1) Specialist Teacher Advisors**

STAs for Sensory and Physical needs provide support to Early Years settings for children with significant and complex sensory or physical needs in Southampton. The STAs have close links with Health which ensures early identification and intervention.

#### **2) Early Years Support Teachers (EYSTs)**

This team of 7 staff all have a dual role combining Foundation Stage Teacher Advisor and Area Senco support. All non maintained settings have an identified

EYST. The EYST Area Senco role supports Early Years Settings in developing SEN support for children with additional needs.

### **3) Southampton Psychology Service**

Educational Psychologist in Southampton work in 3 locality teams (currently known as 'teamlets'). Each of the 7 SEN Funded Settings has a link EP. Children who have Local SEN Support Packages are jointly monitored by the EYSTs and EPs at regular teamlet meetings. Educational Psychologists offer support to Early Years Settings for Early Years Action Plus case work and Statutory Assessment work.

The Southampton Psychology Service also works with the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership to develop and deliver training courses to Early Years Settings and Child Minders. 30 days of training were delivered in the last financial year. Local training is also offered to settings as required by children's emerging needs.

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