

INCLUSION SUB-GROUP REPORT ON OUT-OF-SCHOOL SETTINGS FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Report By: Sue Peasgood, Early Years Inspector

Purpose

1. To present proposals made by the Inclusion sub-group at their meeting on 26/4/05 on supporting effective inclusion of children with special needs in out-of-school settings, for consideration by the Partnership.

Background

2. Whilst support for children with special needs is strong in the early years, it has been recognised by EYDCP officers and the Inclusion sub-group that there is a need to support older children with additional needs to access out-of-school activities. There remains a sum of approximately £30,000 in this year's ring-fenced EYDCP/Sure Start SEN budget which could be used to facilitate this process. Currently money is used to support individual children when appropriate support is available. The difficulty is in finding people with the necessary expertise who are able and prepared to work at the times required e.g. an hour or so each day for after school clubs, or a few weeks in the summer holiday for summer play schemes. The Inclusion sub group decided to devote the major part of the agenda of their meeting on 26/4/05 to try and find a strategic solution to the problem.
3. Support for the inclusion of children under 5 years in early years settings is effective due to the Children's Services' excellent team of pre-school Area SENCOs who provide advice, guidance and training. However, there is no one available to provide a similar service to out-of-school settings such as after school clubs and holiday playschemes. The Inclusion sub-group supported the Early Years Inspector's suggestion that part of the Special Needs budget could be used to fund a co-ordinator to support the out-of-school settings in the same way as the Area SENCOs support the pre-schools and nurseries.
4. This would be a pilot project not only because the post would have to be temporary, due to funding being allocated on an annual basis, but also to ascertain need and the most effective means of support. Part of the role would be to consult children, families and practitioners in out-of-school settings, in order to assess and evaluate the type of support system required. The Out-of-School Area SENCO would be responsible for organising and/or delivering training for practitioners, providing groups with advice on effective strategies to support inclusive practice, and signposting them to appropriate services and resources. The Co-ordinator would need to work afternoons and twilight hours in order to cover the

after school club hours and also work during school holidays in order to support holiday playschemes. The post could be part time.

5. The pre-school Area SENCOs are able to signpost settings to an inclusion grant which allows pre-schools to apply for money to fund training, resources or one-to-one support for individual children. It was proposed by the Inclusion sub-group that the remainder of the Sure Start SEN grant would form an inclusion grant for out-of-school settings. This could support practitioners to attend or buy in training, purchase resources or one-to-one support. The Inclusion sub-group also raised other issues that may require funding, for example insurance and transport. Whilst the Out-of-School Area SENCO could co-ordinate the application process for the grant there would need to be an independent panel who would assess the criteria, eligibility and appropriateness of grant applications.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Partnership supports the recommendations of the Inclusion sub-group that the EYDCP/ Sure Start ring fenced SEN budget be used for the following:

1. The appointment of a temporary Out-of-School Area SENCO to assess needs and to provide advice and training to support inclusion in out-of school settings
2. To set up an inclusion grant for out-of-school settings.