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Live, Laugh, Love to Learn

Parent Carer Partnership Policy

March 2024

L Nixon

**Parents and carers know best**

**It is widely acknowledged that parents/carers are children’s first educators. Not only do parents/carers hold vital information about their child, but they also act as their advocate and a representative of their voice.  Parents and carers become experts in interpreting and translating their child’s subtle body movements, facial expressions, and vocalisations these to others. However, once a child enters an educational/care setting, this role and responsibility is shared with practitioners. It is essential to establish and maintain effective parentships with parents/carers to ensure the best possible outcomes for children.**

**Statutory requirements**

**The importance of working in partnership with parents/carers is reflected within current policy and frameworks, which places a legal responsibility on practitioners and settings. Under the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework (DfE, 2021), practitioners have a statutory responsibility to work in partnership with parent/carers, to share information and to promote the learning and development of their child.**

**This responsibility and the importance of developing effective partnerships with parents/carers is reiterated within the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015). The code emphasises the responsibility of practitioners to work in partnership with parents/carers to ensure that they are provided with opportunities to collaborate and contribute towards their child’s learning and development (DfE, 2015). Furthermore, it is highlighted that parents/carers should be included in all decision-making processes, understand their right to choose and control the level of support they receive and be enabled to express their views and opinions (DfE and DoH, 2015).**

**The EYFS framework (DfE, 2021) and the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) outlines the statutory requirements for working in partnership with parents/carers, however, it provides minimal guidance on how to translate this into practice. Therefore, it is important to develop a shared understanding and ethos of what ‘working in partnership ’ is and what it looks like within your own setting. This can be achieved by developing setting specific policies, which include parents/carers voice and contributions to reflect each family’s diverse needs. Although this maybe a laborious endeavour at the beginning, once a policy has been established, it sets the foundation of values, expectations, and responsibilities. With all policies, they need to be regularly reviewed and updated.**

**Supporting parents through identification and diagnosis**

**For some children, an underlying SEND may not have been previously identified, and it is you as practitioners who may be the first to highlight that a child may have a learning or development need which needs to be assessed further. This can be a very daunting time for a parent/carer and a process which they will need support and guidance to navigate through, from initial identification through to a possible diagnosis.**

**If you have already established a relationship with a parent/carer, it can make conversation such as these a little easier to have. You also often become an intermediary between parents/carers and other professionals, and they will potentially have lots of questions for you. These questions may have already been asked many times by a parent/carer as they continue to seek understanding and reassurance.**

**It is important that you take the time to listen to a parent/carer’s questions and concerns and answer them as best as you can. If you cannot provide an answer, signpost them to the most appropriate professional involved in the care of their child or explain that you will find out for them as soon as you can. Parents/carers need to feel valued and listened to, so even if they have asked the same question or expressed the same concern many times, have patience, listen to them, and provide the support that they require in that moment in time.**

**Potential barriers and how to overcome them**

**At times, it may appear that despite your best efforts, some parents/carers may appear to be reluctant to engage with you or the setting. There are several reasons why this might happen, and you should always attempt to identify any potential barriers, and where reasonably possible, implement strategies to overcome them. A good starting point is to reflect upon what you already offer parents/carers and consider how effective they are in terms of levels of engagement.**

**Points to consider could include aspects such as what are your expectations for parent/carers engagement? Are you offering enough opportunities or too many? How are you communicating and sharing information with parents/carers? Is there a patten in terms of which parents/carers engage more than others and why this could be? This can be conducted at a staff meeting, where you can also share new ideas and strategies to ensure you establish a setting wide approach.**

**A further key point is to reflect upon the individual needs of the children and their families at your setting. Consider the diversity of needs and how best you can meet them in ways that are accessible and flexible. Although it may not be possible to implement individual approaches for every child and their family, it is important to have a range of strategies in place so that they can choose an opportunity which best suits them. For example, if you only hold open days or parent/carer meetings in the mornings, for some parents/carers who work, have other children at home or use home to school transport, mornings just may not work for them. Therefore, consider running several sessions at different times of the day over a week. If you identify that it is challenging for a parent/carer to come into the setting, you could look at offering online meetings or home visits.**

**Also, parents/carers who have a child with SEND often have lots of appointments and meetings to attend, so it is important to give them as much notice of an event as possible and provide reminders as the date approaches. I have three children with SEND and without reminders from their schools about upcoming events, I would forget when they would be happening. In terms of sharing information like this, ensure that you are communicating it in several formats. For example, on newsletters, emails, text messages and if possible, verbally.**

**Qualifications do not speak for themselves**

**When a child enters an educational setting, the education, care, and the wellbeing of a child becomes a shared responsibility between parents/carers and practitioners. It is important that as practitioners, we acknowledge that parents/carers are handing over the responsibility of care to us, and we should not take that  for granted.**

**For some children with more complex medical needs, the responsibility of care can include delivering medical interventions throughout the day, that if not implemented correctly, can have a serious impact upon their health. This must always remain at the forefront of our practice, especially when working in partnership with parents/carers. Sometimes it can take time for parents/carers to build that trust and you must enable them time and space to do that, while also providing them with consistent support and reassurance.**

**Within the earlier stages of my career, I have been guilt of rushing the process of establishing partnerships with parents/carers and felt that my qualifications spoke for themselves in terms of parents/carers trusting me. However, throughout my years of practice and becoming a parent to a child with complex medical needs, I realised that although my qualifications and the Ofsted rating of a setting can be reassuring for parents/carers, it is not always the most important aspect they look for. It is the relationship that you establish with a parent/carer through your communication and actions.**

**Parents/carers want to see you doing the best you possibly can for their child and being responsive to their needs. Therefore, to ensure you are establishing effective partnerships from the very beginning, you need to ensure that you are respectful, approachable, have clear channels of communication and provide children and their parents/carers with the time and space to build trust and be confident to express themselves and feel they are being listened to.**

**References**

**DfE. (2021) Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation stage. Department for Education: London.  [online] Available from:**[**https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/974907/EYFS\_framework\_-\_March\_2021.pdf**](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974907/EYFS_framework_-_March_2021.pdf)**(accessed 27 June 2023).**

**DfE and DoF (2015) Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0-25 years. Department for Education and Department of Health: London.  [online] Available from:**[**https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/398815/SEND\_Code\_of\_Practice\_January\_2015.pdf**](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf)**(accessed 27 June 2023).**

Written by: Date:

The statutory framework in England is the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The latest version of the framework is here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

The requirements of the EYFS in relation to SEND state:

**Provision**: providers must have arrangements in place to support children with SEN or disabilities. All providers who are funded by the local authority to deliver early education places must have regard to the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (footnote).

**SENCO**: providers (in group provision) are expected to identify a SENCO. Childminders are encouraged to identify a person to act as a SENCO and childminders who are ... part of a network may wish to share the role between them.

**Code of practice**: a footnote links to the SEND Code of Practice: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

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**The legal framework**

The following legislation is relevant to this policy:

* Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements (ages 0 – 5).
* The Childcare register requirements (ages 5+ years).
* Equality Act 2010.
* SEND Code of Practice 2014.
* Local Authority SEND guidance including the Local Authority SEND Local Offer.
* Any other relevant legislation and key documents as noted in the text.

Policy statement

All children are entitled to an education that enables them to make the best possible progress.

SEND procedures

Aims, values and principles are reflected in practice, in relation to, for example –

* Close working partnerships with parents.
* Including the voice of the child.
* Identifying and removing barriers to progress whenever possible.
* Having high expectations for all children through a well-planned, individualised curriculum.
* Making reasonable adjustments, as required by the Equality Act, to support each child.
* Meeting the diverse and individual needs of all children and their families.
* Close partnership working with other settings and / or agencies to support the child.

**SENCO**: as your childminder, I am the SENCO for the setting. I have further information about my roles and responsibilities which I can share with you on request. If I identify a child is not making the best possible progress in one or more areas of learning, or if parents approach me with concerns, I will work closely with you to provide additional support.

**Code of practice**: if your child receives the Government 2-, 3- or 4-year-old funding (age ranges to be expanded from 2024), I am legally required to have a copy of the SEND Code of Practice, which I will share with you on request.

Further SEND considerations

**Admission policy**: the Admission Policy is the same for all children and inclusive. I offer, for example, flexible settling-in sessions and support through the key person system.

I will share more information with you about how I manage admissions on request.

**Identification and assessment:** individual children are included, valued and supported using the Graduated Approach (assess, plan, do and review), for example –

* I speak to parents about the child, including their starting points.
* I use observation to identify children’s needs as early as possible.
* I am ready to change the environment to support a child’s individual care or learning needs.
* I ensure group planning is adapted to include every child, so all children receive the same curriculum experiences whenever possible.
* I update children’s individual planning regularly with input from parents and note if, for example, a child needs specialist equipment or support and provide it where possible.
* With parental permission, I am happy to support children who already have an Education, Health and Care Plan in place and work closely with other agencies or professionals to support the child.

Please also see the Parent Partnership Policy.

**Preparing children for transitions:** I aim to support transitions for all children, for example, if they are moving on to a new room (in a group setting) or a new setting such as nursery or school. Procedures are in place for sharing information with other settings and parents will be consulted throughout the process. When requested, information will be shared with other settings and / or professionals to support the child.

**Multi-agency meetings**: where required, I will work with parents and other professionals to attend or submit information to meetings which are set up to support the child.

If you have any questions, please ask. Thank you.

Signed: Review date:

Policy updates

**Updated 08.2023** – general wording check to ensure policy is current and valid.