

Improving Intervention Strategy for Pupils with Special Educational Needs

Early Years Panels

Early Years Decision Making Arrangements

General Principles

Early years decision making arrangements for children with SEN should be:

- **Multi agency**
Requiring liaison and information sharing with agreed responsibilities and accountability between Children's Service, Early Years and Childcare Service(EYCS), Health, other agency advisers professionals and practitioners;
- **Co-ordinated**
Representing key providers (Children's Service/EYCS/Health), transparent with easily understandable access routes, efficient in process and execution and effective in outcome;
- **Consistent**
Surrey– wide, based on application of Surrey SEN criteria;
- **Timely**
To meet statutory timescales and facilitate timely access to provision and resources;
- **Early education provider neutral**
Decisions aligned primarily to the level of child's need not to the type of early education provision the child is accessing although funding arrangements will differ dependant on setting;
- **The only early years SEN decision making arrangements for each administrative area of Surrey**
A "one stop shop" for all decisions arising from any referral/request for additional funding provision at or above Early Years Action Plus, any request for statutory assessment, any placement recommendation, any provision review, any placement change or pupil transfer or transition plan in respect of all pre-school/nursery age children resident in Surrey. (NOTE: Final decisions on specialist placement will still be made through the appropriate placement panels.)

Early Years Decision Making

First Steps:

- All Surrey maintained early years education settings provide Early Years Action (EYA) and Action Plus (EYA+) arrangements from resources which are generally directly available to them.

- Non-maintained (and independent) settings provide EYA and lower need EYA+ arrangements from their own resources.
- All settings have access to external professional support;
- EYA and EYA+ arrangements in all settings take into account SEN Code of Practice guidelines and are capable of meeting any child's SEN to a threshold at which the child's SEN are considered to require additional or different arrangements to those already being provided and/or statutory intervention (assessment, Statement etc.) and/or further resources;
- The threshold at which a child's severity of need necessitates access to additional or different arrangements and/or statutory intervention and/or further resourcing, is determined by the early years panels in all cases, other than in very exceptional emergency circumstances. The threshold depends on the type of setting as the resources available to maintained and non-maintained settings for EYA+ differ.
- Panel decisions are based on evidence which, illustrates the child's needs, the interventions undertaken, the timescale and the child's progress, and apply this evidence to the Surrey Foundation Stage arrangements and attainment criteria outlined in main criteria document, Special Educational Needs: A Graduated Response or Foundation Stage criteria (non-maintained).

Referral routes: The two main routes by which individual cases are referred to SEN Management for the Early Years Panels (EYP).

- By early years education settings who collate the case evidence following a formal review of the child's IEP at Early Years Action Plus. The Review will have involved relevant multi professional consultation and assessment and sought parental permission for the referral to be made.
- By SEN Management, who collate the case evidence (as per current practice), following a pre-school notification (PSN) or parental or school request for the LEA to consider statutory assessment of the child's SEN.

In exceptional circumstances other education services e.g. Portage or Physical and Sensory Support Service may refer a child where these services have had significant involvement with the child. In these cases the child will have a high level of need but a PSN has not been received and the service involved considers that the child's entitlement to a specialist placement or additional funding may be compromised by waiting for the PSN.

Subsequent to an initial referral, EYP can decide if and when any case should be re-referred for further consideration by the panel.

Panels and panel membership:

There are four early years' SEN decision-making panels for the whole of Surrey. Each panel covers one of the four Surrey Children's Service administrative areas.

NOTE Area CAP panels for 0-5 years olds may be run after the SEN decision making panel and may include some of the same members along with other appropriate professionals.

The core membership of each panel reflects the multi agency responsibilities for early years and comprises representation from the following professional groups or agencies with at least one representative from each:

- Early Years and Childcare Service
- Senior Educational Psychologist*
- Locality Manager (rotating)
- SEN Management
- Educational Psychologist (rotating as for SEN panels)
- Other Children's Service professional(s) (eg PSSS, Portage, Complex Needs Team etc) may be invited.
- Designated Doctor for Education/Community Paediatrician
- Representatives from Therapy Services (OT, Physio, SaLT, CAMHS)

* chair (takes responsibility to ensure adequate minutes are taken; minute taking is expected to rotate)

Other professional group or agency representatives can be invited to join the panel if the need for specific professional input or advice not already available from the core membership arises in any individual case. An observer from any group or agency is welcome to attend an EYP. This will be by prior agreement and would usually be for training purposes (e.g. to familiarise a representative from an early years setting or future panel member with EYP processes).

Panel members are not required to have a direct personal or professional involvement with any individual case. Each panel member's role requires them to apprise themselves of each case and of the issues relevant to the profession or agency which they represent, undertake an objective assessment of the available evidence, provide professional or agency insight, advice and perspective on their assessment of the evidence and contribute to the panel's decision.

Panel members are expected to take personal responsibility for communication, liaison, information gathering, feedback, action and follow up as necessary with any individuals or sub groups within the overall professional group or agency which they represent.

Panel members are expected to commit to a minimum of a 6 month term of office to ensure consistency and continuity and to find and brief a substitute if they are unable to attend a panel meeting.

Training for all panel members and the panel chair will be provided before they undertake their role on the panel. In the first instance this may be provided by the Senior Educational Psychologist IISEN but would then be expected to be by briefing from the outgoing panel representative for that professional group.

Panels – administrative arrangements:

- Each area panel meets once per month during term time with panels on the east or west of the county alternating every fortnight and to immediately precede the SEN panel. (i.e. in the east the NE panel meets one fortnight and the SE the next and similarly on the west the SW panel meets one fortnight and the NW the next.) In

circumstances where statutory assessment timescales may be compromised by waiting for the next area panel cases could be put to the parallel panel on that side of the county.

- SEN Management will draw up panel agenda, collate referral information and photocopy panel papers and distributed to panel members at least 1 week prior to the meeting.
- Panel decisions, action points, timescales, lead agency/profession responsibility are recorded. Notes are distributed to panel members and to any agency, which has referred a case (ie. early years education settings and SEN Management) as relevant.
- SEN Management informs parents and referrers of the panel decision and the action which is being taken and provides the financial requisition to the finance team. A formal panel decision letter signed by the Locality manager is sent to the parents and copied to the relevant referring agency within maximum of 10 working days of the panel meeting.
- The agency making the referral co-ordinates implementation of the panel's decisions.
- Individual panel members are responsible for:
 - communicating panel decisions to individuals throughout their profession/agency as relevant;
 - supporting implementation of panel decisions by securing input, action, support and resourcing from relevant individuals within their profession/agency;
 - following up action of their agency/profession and providing feed back on case progress as necessary.

Panels – scope of decision making:

In any individual case panels aim to facilitate early intervention and will, whenever possible, seek to meet children's needs without recourse to a Statement.

Panels will decide:-

- Whether or not any additional or different (and if so the extent of the additional or different) intervention, teaching and learning arrangements are required with reference to the current criteria documents for maintained and non-maintained settings.
- The level of funding required to meet these arrangements.
- Whether or not to allocate ISPSB funding to any early years education setting for additional or different arrangements above that already available to the setting irrespective of whether or not a statutory assessment has been undertaken and Statement issued.

- For any ISPSB funding allocated to a setting for an individual child without a Statement panels set out the additional or different arrangements specific to the child to be provided by the setting.
- The funding allocation to be time bonded, prorated to the child's need and period of attendance and subject to regular (6 month) review by the panel.
- Whether external agency/professional inputs should be sought/requested. Panels will decide the level of any professional or agency support to be provided to support any child and/or setting whether or not a statutory assessment has been undertaken and a Statement issued. Where such provision is made without a Statement the same panel oversight that applies to ISPSB funding and time bonding, prorating etc., applies.
- Monitoring arrangements and review periods necessary to ensure the child's needs are met whilst the child continues to access its current early years education setting. Panels review all cases for which arrangements above Early Years Action Plus have been agreed, particularly where there is no Statement, prior to the child transferring to statutory age provision to ensure a smooth transition and continuation of appropriate oversight of the child's needs in its new education setting. Panel will ensure that a Lead Professional for each child has been appointed, usually the setting SENCO. The Lead Professional will be advised by panel of their duties in relation to monitoring arrangements, review periods and timescale for child to be returned to panel for review.
- Whether or not it is necessary to commence statutory assessment in any individual case and subsequently will decide whether or not a Statement should be issued.
- Whether to recommend that a child be considered for placement in some other type of early years education setting appropriate to the child's needs and refer to the relevant placement panel for decision.
- To refer a child for assessment for specialist equipment or adaptations where necessary to enable the child to access the appropriate setting if this assessment does not already form part of the paperwork presented to panel.