

Children with SEND in the early years:

Ensuring every child gets the best start in life



Who are Dingley's Promise?

A charity delivering specialist nursery provision for children with SEND

- Six Centres working with children, families and mainstream providers
- Thousands of children and families supported over 41 years
- 35% to 70% transitions to the mainstream

A will to drive an inclusion movement

- Working across the UK with LAs, providers, partners & parents
- Training for mainstream providers
- Advice and support for the DfE
- Lobbying for change nationally representing their voices



Inclusion: the national picture

- 73% settings say number of children with SEND is rising
- 28% of settings had turned children with SEND away.
- 92% have had to use their own funds to support them. (Early Years Alliance 2022)
- Staffing crisis EYPs and specialists



Only 6% of local authorities believe they have enough provision for all children with SEND in the early years (Coram, 2024)

Impact on families

- Only 16 per cent of mothers with disabled children work, compared to 61 per cent of other mothers. (Contact)
- 3 in 4 parents have to give up work because of a lack of support for their children. (Disabled Children's Partnership, 2023)
- One in five say that isolation has led to the break up of their family life, and 72% say it has led to mental ill health (Contact 2011)

Barriers to inclusion

- Excessive paperwork
- Lack of staff
- Little free, practical training
- Long waits for therapists
- Insufficient funding



Inclusive mindset

- Parents are experts in their children – but want honesty
- 1:1 support is not always best
- Behaviour is communication
- Some inclusion is better than none
- Good inclusive practice helps everyone – and is everyone's work
- Every child is an individual
- Celebratory approach



What does effective inclusion look like?

- Early identification – child development knowledge
- Early intervention – graduated approach with specialist support at the right time
- Enabling environment – physical, communication & sensory
- Parent partnership – respect and courage
- High quality transitions – start early, shared expectations, mutual respect
- Inclusive curriculum – differentiation and access



Parent Partnership

- Home visit to understand family situation
- Joint thinking and target setting
- Regular contact to ensure they feel informed (catch ups start and end of day/ regular progress meetings/ online observations exchange)
- Support and signposting to other services
- Focus on statutory paperwork and meeting deadlines
- Parent as the expert of their child – with challenge
- Recognise your influence on parent feelings



Our advice to others

Local Authorities

- Interact, listen, co produce with parents
- Promote OAP and SENDIASS widely
- Add parent satisfaction to all local data
- Case studies of child success

Settings

- Involve families in everything and really listen to and respect them – keep them updated always
- Training for staff critical for confidence and welcome
- One pager of services to refer to



What tools do we have to help us?

- Ordinarily Available Provision document
- Graduated Approach
- DfE EY Assessment Guidance
- Dingley's Promise inclusion training

Dingley's Promise Inclusion Training

- 5 live courses
- Free to access locally
- 5 hours study plus 3 hours video each
- Totally flexible learning
- Works best when teams learn together!



Manifesto for early years inclusion

- Launched November 2023 at House of Lords
- Three main areas recommended:
 - Workforce development – whole setting training
 - Funding – simplify systems, delink DAF and DLA, use HNB funds
 - Sufficiency – LAs need to understand, Ofsted needs to support



How parent carers can get involved

- Push local settings to take up inclusion training
- Sign up to our newsletter
- Consider volunteering to speak at an event
- Send us your concerns to tell decision makers
- Contribute to strategy groups in your LA
- Join your local parent voice organisation



Thank you

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