

Development of an Enhanced Family Support Offer for Children with SEND (Case Study)

What have we learnt?

The following learning has been collated having reviewed the data, and from conversations and questionnaires with schools, providers, parents, practitioners and children and young people following the initial working groups and the early 'Keeping in touch' meetings.

See the strand learning and illustrative Case studies of projects by strand (attached).

Generic Learning

Recruitment has been a challenge for many projects, and many have had to be creative in terms of sharing, backfilling, training, and developing existing staff or inducting staff new to education but with relevant skills sets or experience.

Collaborative work needs excellent regular communication to ensure that all parties have similar expectation and a collective belief that the project will meet their needs. This has been an issue for some in terms of 'identifying the bar for referral' for example.

Collaborative working needs staff to be flexible to work effectively across different ethos's etc.

Systems such as supervision, Lone Working and Safeguarding need to be clear, consistent, and managed across the partnership.

Projects can support and act as drivers towards whole school initiatives such as developing a sense of Belonging or pupil mental health and wellbeing.

All reporting projects have identified significant improvements in attendance, behaviour and parental confidence for a number of the pupils engaged in the project.

Several projects suggested that their projects will reduce the number of EHCP and Special School applications over time.

Creating branding for the project e.g. The Bridge can create a stronger community partnership and joint ownership feel rather than a situation where one school is 'doing something' to others.

Strand 1 Development of an enhanced family support offer for children with SEN

Early Learning

- By providing guidance, support, and access to resources, enhanced Family Support Workers help families navigate challenging situations, strengthen relationships within the family and with school, and build resilience.
- FSWs can fill the gap left by the decline in service support and long waiting lists for assessment.
- FSWs support children and their families with a variety of problems such as: drug and alcohol addiction; having a parent in hospital; a parent or child with a disability or special educational needs (SEN) and so gain the confidence of parents and give insight to schools.
- FSWs can provide valuable tools and resources that can help an individual cope with tough life situations or events and provide education and guidance on how to cope with stress, manage emotions, and develop positive coping strategies.
- FSWs can help improve behaviour in schools by helping schools know and understand their pupils and the influences on them as well as help teach learning behaviours and supporting behaviours in the home.

Case study

The University of Brighton Project has two clear aims to address growing challenges:

- To improve parental confidence in mainstream education through providing guidance for parents to access the best support services to help their children.
- To support parents to better manage the complex SEND needs of their children in the home so school resources can be appropriately and effectively deployed.
- Two Enhanced Family Support workers have been employed to work across the partnership of seven schools all with and are currently working with a caseload of 24 pupils identified and referred by school SENCOs and triaged by FSWs. Their maximum capacity at any one time is approximately 30 but does depend on the level and complexity of need.
- The intervention period is 8-10 weeks when the child is either successfully discharged and the case closed, or the child is referred on to higher level support work.
- They develop home-school links and build a school/home relationship with families whose parents often have had a poor experience at school themselves.

Examples of cases:

A parent felt or has been advised, after a diagnosis/assessment by an external professional that their child needs an EHCP. They did not want their child to have the school experience they had, but equally did not understand what an EHCP was. The school could not support an EHCP application as the child was well supported in school and the evidence of need was not there.

A child with communication delays was often proving exceedingly difficult in the classroom. Work with the parents on using the language tool MACKTON at home in support of school-based intervention brought improvements which have led to a dramatic improvement in behaviours in the classroom. The child's behaviour log incidents have gone down from 30 to 6.

A child who was regularly disruptive and exhibiting very short concentration spans was assessed by the FSW at home and found to have a poor bedtime regime. Parents were supported to improve the bedtime regime and now the child comes to school with energy and able to focus in class. The child's attendance has improved from 79% to 96%.

The FSWs are seen as 'safe' - they are not teachers and not social workers. They are seen as a stepping stone connecting school and home. They build relationships with the families and can find out things that the schools are unaware of e.g. awaiting eviction or a family bereavement.

A key role is to empower parents and stop them feeling out of control. This is important for the children's mental wellbeing as FSW support often reduces stress in the family. The family is more relaxed and structured with support at home which the schools could not normally provide e.g. predictability is big for neurodiverse children.

Jen Poulter. Inclusion Coordinator at the Baird Primary Academy:

'The Send Family Key Work Support Programme works by supporting children who have additional needs but are functioning beyond the level where they are eligible for additional support. Often parents who are struggling at home or where there is some breakdown of communication between parent and school feel they need help and often it causes issues around the need or not for an EHCP.'

'The benefits of the programme have been a huge improvement in communication between parent and school. It's made massive difference where perhaps the relationship has broken down between parents and school, as it helps schools and parents to understand a little bit more about the child's needs in each environment. Kirsty and Emma (FSWs) have been absolutely amazing at building those relationships with parents, going into the home, and seeing how things are functioning. They're offering really gentle and nurturing support, gently challenging, when necessary, but also bringing those things into school as well so ensuring consistency in terms of behaviour management skills.'

A lot of our families don't meet the threshold for early help keywork, but there's definitely need for support both within the home and at school. And so, they fill that niche really, really well because for the parents, it doesn't feel threatening. It's not social services. People aren't going in to take their children away from them. Equally they are not seen as teachers, which some parents are worried about approaching.'

'It really, really supports the children's mental health and wellbeing as well. They've got a lot of consistency between what goes on at home and what goes on at school and they've got a familiar face in both settings, which has been really helpful for them. It really helps us as a school to understand the home environment of those children and the challenges they might be facing e.g. eviction, bereavements etc.'

'So, with greater understanding, we can better support them. We can adapt their provision in school for that and the parents get somebody who can support them, and they feel are championing them, which builds parental confidence to work with, and communicate with the school as well. The parents feel more empowered to support the children'.

Dom O’Riorden, Headteacher West St Leonards identified an example of impact on a pupil ‘I think H is a great example because he was very difficult in a morning, he was someone who wouldn’t want to come into school. And would not engage with staff. Now look at that relationship, when he sees the principal, he wants, me wants to be proud of him. Today he ran up to me to show me down the page of writing. He said, I’ve written four paragraphs. I think that’s the power.

Jackie Gillespie SENCO Silverdale Primary Academy ‘The provision of the FSW has been invaluable in taking away some of the ‘home concerns’ e.g. bedtimes, home behaviour and routines etc away from the SENCO. It has also enabled home support that can help families in crisis, mental health, and attendance.’

The collaborative work has given rise to examples of:

- improved attendance from our EBSA pupils.
- children are making much better progress in school with far fewer behaviour incidents.
- there have been behavioural improvements where, FSW supporting parenting at home has, has led to better knowledge and understanding and consistency of approach.
- the FSWs have done lots of work with parents around sleep routines as it can have a huge impact on how well children access education. With the children sleeping better, they’re performing better in school, and it makes a huge difference.
- a huge improvement in mental health and wellbeing for these children, whereby because parents are feeling calm and supported at home, the children are feeling calm and supported.
- improvement in their behavioural and emotional regulation as well
- improvement in their self-confidence and their ability to achieve in school has really improved.

Pupil and family case studies

Pupil A exhibits a split personality and can change quickly from a quiet pleasant demeanour to an aggressive, violent, and foul language child. The triggers can be frustration, being told ‘no’ etc. He is on the waiting list for a CAHMS assessment. He was referred to the FSW.

The FSW has observed the pupil at home and in school and utilised a range of strategies at school and backed up at home. These include anger management, sleep management and bedtime routines, talking through bad days and a reward system.

The pupil has built a relationship with the FSW at school and at home and likes the consistency and communication as does mum and there has been a reduction of behaviour incidents. Kirsty is now supporting the family through an eviction they are awaiting the bailiffs under a section 21.

The parent has been enrolled on a parenting course for additional support. Mum has 3 children at school and one at nursery. The eldest get frustrated very quickly and gets very angry, she also has bad anxiety. She is worried about people looking at her and continually washes her hands.

She was supported by EYFS ISEND (Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability), but the case is closed. The second child shows evidence of hyperactivity and is awaiting CAHMS but has been told there is a two-year waiting list. The nursery child has had a CDC assessment

for autism. Mun was at breaking point and desperate for help, so she was referred to Kirsty who worked with her and the children on calming strategies and sensory strategies. She is now working with Dad to get him engaged.

Both parents are now more confident, and their situations are improving. All children have improved attendance and less behaviour issues.

Parental comment:

Parent A - 'I like Kirsty (FSW) she is calm and helpful and she is helping me manage my son, I never get time to speak to the teacher and with Kirsty I don't have to talk in front of everyone at pick up time. It's difficult for me to meet after school as I have other children to meet. She is brilliant.'

Parent B - 'I was broken before Kirsty came along but now; I can see the light at the end of the tunnel.'

Pupil comment:

I'm really happy about being on the bridge program to help me get into year 7, cause I feel like it can really build my confidence and just, and just dissolve all my worries.

I'm happy about being on the bridge programme, cause it's gonna help me defeat my worries in, um, about moving into year 7.'