



### National Context

In Early Years we are seeing a significant rise in the number of children with SEND coming into our settings. Not only are the numbers increasing, but the range of needs are also growing and becoming more complex. Data on the number of Education, Health and Care Plans issued to children under 5, shows a rise of 25% since 2019, from 12,398 to 16,531 in 2022 (information published by the Office of National Statistics). It's no longer speech and language delay, grommets, global developmental delay and autism, it is a vast spectrum of needs and disabilities. Early Years settings need support from education, health, social care and the voluntary sector. The supportive work alongside the education and care of the child can be very time-consuming. If we all believe that our youngest children deserve the best start in life then we must invest in Early Years, these are the foundation years where we can truly make a difference to children's life chances. Practitioners, parents and children should not have to face a postcode lottery for services and resources. We need consistency and appropriate funding across all authorities.

### Starting Points

In the Thames Valley Hub region, we have worked hard to engage partners and local authorities to gain a good understanding of the challenges being faced. All have spoken about the rising numbers and complexity of children with SEND. We know this is a national struggle, but every day counts in a child's life, and we must strive to get it right. Through the Stronger Practice Hubs partnership with Dingley Promise we have been able to work together to enhance the SEND and Inclusion support offered in our area.

### Support Offered

As a Hub we wanted to be able to support settings in feeling more confident in their inclusive practice. We wanted to design a support offer that complimented the offers already available such as the National Level 3 SENCo qualification and the bespoke support Many LAs in our reach area provide to children who already have an EHCP. Important to us was building the confidence of all practitioners, not just the SENCos in the setting, as we feel that a setting can only truly be inclusive when all practitioners feel confident to support children with SEND.

Our SEND offer has three main focal points:

#### **Inclusion Training**

offering the Dingley Promise Inclusion Training Package free of charge to all practitioners across our area, including childminders. These short courses are online, flexible and open to all staff members to study at a time that suits them. Course titles include 'An Introduction to Inclusion', 'Having Difficult Conversations with Families', 'Early Years SEND Transitions'.





### Open Events with a SEND Focus



we have offered a series of open events at both our lead setting Blagdon and at a number of Dingley Promise settings across our hub 'home' area. These sessions have focussed on SEND topics such as, visual timetables and now and next boards, the use of everyday resources in a SEND context and practical activities and idea to support SEND in your mainstream setting.

### EEF (Education Endowment Foundation) Partner Programme Nomination

We nominated 'Through My Eyes' to be a research programme in partnership with the EEF. This means that we value the programme and wanted to give the programme an opportunity to be refined through development and evaluation, with the support of the experts at the EEF. Through My Eyes is focussed programme, looking at how to best support children with social communication difficulties. The programme will now be trailed in 12 settings across our area.



### Impact Evaluation

The Dingley's Promise Training has had a positive impact on our Hub. The confidence and knowledge of our Early Years Practitioners, Childminders and settings has increased because of the training.

To date 306 Early Years practitioners have accessed the training across the Stronger Practice Hub, region with 14% being childminders. The feedback from the courses shows.

100% of practitioners who have completed the post-training survey say they feel more confident in supporting children with SEND.

98% of learner believe they can support more children with SEND as a result of their training. 77% are committed to making a change in their setting.

Our open events have not only enabled practitioners to develop their own academic knowledge and confidence but have supplied them with real examples and resources they can take away to use in their settings. Feed back from the events has included.

*'It made us reflect on our routines, and understand the need for our routines to be more tailored to individual children's needs', 'Since the open session we have reviewed our resources and ordered more resources for our outside area', 'Following the open evening we have looked at our staff's training needs, and several have booked onto the hubs SEND training programmes'.*

The Through My Eye's programme is being co-funded as a development project with the EEF which will have three longer term benefits to the sector, firstly it is an opportunity to refine the programme through development and evaluation, secondly, it will support settings with accessing evidence-informed professional development that could improve their practice and thirdly it may start to close evidence gaps identified by EEF when summarising evidence for the early years evidence store.