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## **A cohesive approach between LA SEND teams and schools to embed consistent, actionable SEND targets in early years**

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## A cohesive approach between LA SEND teams and schools to embed consistent, actionable SEND targets in early years

### Creating consistency in early years SEND practice

## School/Background Context

This Local authority (LA) EYSEN Service sits in the West Midlands, with a culturally and socio-economically diverse population. The service consists of Teachers and Senior Learning Support Practitioners who work in homes, Private, Voluntary and Independent settings, Nursery Schools, Childminders and 2 Year-Old provisions in Primary Schools. The service supports approximately 150 children at any one point of the academic year, all of whom are registered as having SEND.

## The Challenge

The aim of the project was to improve the quality of outcomes for children with SEND in the Early Years across the whole of the region. This was to be achieved by making the report style of the service's Individual Consultation Requests, more outcome focused and looking at the quality of targets written for children's Assess, Plan, Do, Review targets in settings more transferable and implementable by the vast range of practitioners working across the Early Years sector.

The best way of collecting the data was felt to be through a 'before and after' snapshot of targeted feedback from the most consistent group of Sencos across the Borough who had enough knowledge, understanding and experience of the role to be able to report upon the developments made and what impact it had upon their setting (Link to Forms feedback found below).

## What They Did

The new report was designed and whilst still reporting upon the child's strengths and needs, it did not go into as much detail as a first point of contact. Instead, the report identified clearly how the targets can be linked to each area of need that the child had, and how those recommended targets could be implemented and reviewed. This was presented to the region's Inclusion Lead for approval and fitted closely to the requirements and boundaries that were being set by the SEN Assessment Team for EHCNA requests and also developed on from the Local Authorities expectations of what should be in a setting's Ordinarily Available Provision.

## What They Did (continued)

The reports were rolled out from October 2024 and all LA specialist teachers developed the change of report style as a team, which really helped the team's confidence in transitioning to this new report style after what had felt like years of recovery from Covid and the need to repeatedly produce very detailed and complex report about children who had only recently been identified with SEND and yet had profound needs. The new report style flowed well with the new direction of the LA as a whole, with a returned focus to Quality First Teaching and improved Graduated Approach evidence, as opposed to a 'reactive' approach to unidentified High Level Needs children in the Early Years, partly as a consequence of a lack of face to face contact from Health Professionals before starting school.

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## Outcomes and Anticipated Impact

**The new report style has been received well by settings:**

- 88% felt that the new report style enabled them to improve the quality of their APDR process.
- 75% preferred the new style report to the old.

The quality of APDRs on SENIF applications and Referrals to the EYSEN team has noticeably improved.

The team are aware that the need for training and support around writing quality short and long term targets for children will always be there and constantly needs re-visiting and reviewing every year. This is especially important in the Early Years sector as recruitment and retention is such an issue alongside the ever changing complexity of children's needs and the impact of technology upon developing brains, and the competency of staff entering the workforce.

The team are going to continue to use the new style report for the rest of the academic year, and continually develop it as the year progresses. They are going to explore using the 'Review' section to evidence progress for children who require repeat EYSEND consultations and ongoing specialist advice.