

## **Our LOCAL OFFER for Special Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

### **Background**

The Children and Families Act introduces a requirement for every Local Authority to publish a Local Offer. This will contain information about services the local authority expects to be available in their area for children and young people (from birth to twenty five) who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (**SEND**). Heather Playgroup's Local Offer contains information for parents and carers specific to our setting.

### **How does Heather Playgroup know if my child needs extra help?**

- You may have concerns about your child's development
- Playgroup staff may identify concerns as part of ongoing observation and assessment
- A healthcare professional may have identified issues at a developmental review
- Your child may not be making expected progress
- There may be a change in your child's behaviour

### **What should I do if I think my child may have special educational needs or disabilities?**

- Initially, you can discuss your concerns with your child's key worker.
- Your key worker may involve the settings SENCO
- The keyworker and or SENCO will meet with parents to gather information and views.

### **How will Heather Playgroup staff support my child?**

- Observation and assessment will guide setting staff to identify what support may be needed.
- This will be discussed with parents, so that parents' views and expectations can be taken into account.
- Sometimes a Play Plan is produced jointly by staff and parents, to enable staff to use specific strategies to help your child make progress, for example one to one activities to help speech development. The play plan will also include strategies that parents can use at home.
- The play plan will include dates for review, which is usually half termly, but can be more frequently depending on individual needs.
- If your child starts to make progress with a play plan this will be continually reviewed and monitored, and it is possible that no further action is required.
- If Heather Playgroup staff require expert support and advice on strategies to support your child, they will contact the West Sussex Early Childhood Service for advice.
- Heather Playgroup's SENCO may recommend a referral to outside agency if it is felt that additional support is needed (eg speech and language therapist)
- Our SENCO maintains a register of all children with SEN, to ensure their progress is regularly monitored and reviewed.

### **3. How will the curriculum be matched to my child's needs?**

- Initially information about what your child likes and needs will be gathered from the "All About Me" section of the child's learning journal, which is completed by parents, and from discussion with parents.
- Information may also be obtained from other professionals working with your child, and suggestions of activities may come from these (eg speech therapist or play therapist.)
- This information may form the basis of a play plan.
- Observation and assessment is used to identify children's interests and needs. Group staff planning ensure that a balanced view of each child is obtained, and activities are designed to match these needs
- Sometimes activities can be extended or changed to provide opportunities for individual children
- Sometimes activities are set up specifically for an individual child. (In this case other children will also be able to access that activity too at some point.
- Sometimes we can set up an individual or group activity specifically for child's need; other situations we are able to slightly change routines and activities for whole group in a way that enables all children to access eg move from table to floor; different resources
- Your child's progress will be recorded through observations and photos in their learning journal. Next Steps for development will be planned jointly by keyworkers and parents approximately every half term.
- Your keyworker will monitor your child's progress through an Individual Monitoring Form in the learning journal. If expected progress is not being made, your keyworker will let you know and may arrange a meeting with the setting SENCO.

### **4. How will both you and I know how my child is doing and how will you help me to support my child's learning?**

- Staff are available on a daily basis for short chats, or can arrange a time for a longer discussion. We can let you know what activities we are doing, and give you some ideas about what you can do at home.
- All children are given a Home Contact Book which playgroup uses regularly to pass on information to home. Parents and carers can also use these to share information with the playgroup.
- We display plans on wall showing which activities or topic we will be looking at next. We also include details of activities in our regular newsletters.
- If necessary, parents can be involved in planning process (eg if child is anxious about changes we can work on setting things up with child and parent present so there are no surprises)
- If parents would like support with extending learning in the home, they can discuss ideas with a member of staff, or even better come in for a stay and play, so they can see how their child learns at playgroup.

## **5. What support will there be for my child's overall well being?**

- During settling in visits we will discuss with you any expected needs and how we will provide for these.
- When your child first starts, their keyworker will observe them closely and get to know them.
- We will liaise with you to make sure you are happy with the care they are receiving. We know that you know your child best, so if we feel we need to introduce new strategies we will work together to come up with a shared solution.
- We have medical forms to record each item of medicine that your child takes regularly. We will set up a meeting with you to enable us to understand their medical need and if necessary can liaise with health care staff working with families. Some of our staff have experience of using inhalers for asthma. All regular childcare staff have a current paediatric first aid certificate.

## **6. What specialist services and expertise are available at or accessed by the early years setting?**

- We use the West Sussex Early Childhood Service for support and advice. They have a telephone support service for practitioners and can help us identify additional support services that may be required.
- We can work with Health Visitors and Children and Family Centre staff.

## **7. What training have the staff, supporting children with SEND, had or are having?**

- Staff have been trained using Solihull Approach to behaviour, supporting children to understand their emotions.
- Staff have taken part in Positive Behaviour training
- Staff have Health and Safety training
- All childcare staff have a First Aid Certificate
- All regular childcare staff have a professional qualification in childcare, ranging from Level 2 to Level 5
- Our SENCO attends regular SEN meetings.

## **8. How will my child be included in activities outside the early years setting including trips?**

- We plan a whole group summer outing each year, where parents are required to accompany their child. A range of suitable venues are usually identified by issuing questionnaire to parents to give suggestions. Staff then shortlist then usually visit to risk assess and check suitability. Parents of SEN children would be included in this process to ensure where possible the outing was suitable for all.
- We plan regular more local outings each term, for example nature or listening walks in the locality, walks to the local shops or park. If one to one support is required by a child, then a parent or carer may be requested to accompany us.
- Parents of children with specific needs may be invited to be involved with risk assessing outings and trips.
- Leaflets are displayed in the hallway for local Children and Family Centres with information about local activities, services and drop-in sessions.

## **9. How accessible is the early years setting environment? (Indoors and outdoors)**

- We have ramp access to our rear double doors. However we do not yet have accessible toilet areas. We are in the process of improving access to the building, with work due to be carried out over the next three years. This includes a proposed accessible toilet and changing facility.
- Sometimes, Heather Playgroup staff can make an activity more accessible to a child by positioning it in a different area (eg outside rather than inside; on a table; on the floor). We assess children's needs and through observation we make decisions about making activities as accessible as possible to all children. This may be due to their emotional needs or physical needs (for example your child may prefer to access an activity in a quieter area or in a smaller group)
- Staff will work with families to identify and address needs in collaboration with other services if necessary

## **10. How will the early years setting prepare and support my child to join the early years setting**

- Our settling in policy allows for individual families circumstance to be taken into account. Your keyworker will discuss with you any concerns you may have about settling in, and may suggest extra visits prior to starting to familiarise your child with staff, children and the environment.
- Sometimes it helps a child to stay for a partial session at first, and build up the length of session gradually. We are flexible with this.
- Your keyworker will discuss with you how this is going, so that joint decisions can be made.
- We will give parents an "All About Me" booklet to fill in so that we have lots of information about your child's likes and dislikes before they start.

## **What about transfer to a new setting/school?**

- We provide extensive transition structure, including specific pre-school sessions in the summer term for children preparing to go to school. Children take part in a range of activities including trying on uniform, changing for PE, simple pre reading and prewriting games, number games, stories about school and visits to a local school.
- We always invite staff from the new school to visit the child in our setting
- For a child moving to a new setting, we will liaise with parents and the new setting to identify which strategies will help the child to prepare for the change. This may include getting some photos or a photo book from the new setting to share with the child, looking at websites on the computer and group discussion and role play.
- In some cases we may invite a member of staff from the new setting to visit.
- We will provide parents with the child's Learning Journal to pass on to the new setting. This will include a "Moving On" report to include any essential information for the new setting.

## **11. How are the early years setting's resources allocated and matched to children's special educational needs?**

- We have to take into account the needs of all children, but as a non-profit making charity, we always allocate resources in the best possible way to aid children's progress.
- Sometimes we are able to make use of volunteer staff to complement our day to day work. Our staff all work flexibly where possible to assist the settling in process.
- We regularly use equipment from the Toy Library, and can access sensory equipment from our local Children and Family Centre.

## **12. How is the decision made about what type and how much support my child will receive?**

- Firstly your Keyworker will discuss with you what your expectations and views are. Your Keyworker will liaise with the SENCO and other setting staff involved in your child's care.
- Our SENCO may approach other professionals working with your child, and advisors from the West Sussex Inclusion Team for additional support.
- Your Keyworker and/or SENCO will meet with you again to discuss a final plan of action. Once agreed, this will be shared with the staff team, so everybody is working together to the same goals. This will be reviewed according to progress your child is making and level of support may be increased or decreased accordingly.

## **13. How are parents involved in the early years setting? How can I be involved?**

- We always welcome parents and carers to stay and play, or to be involved in fundraising and organising social events.
- As a small and friendly organisation, we very much encourage parents to be involved on a regular basis. Obviously different families have different commitments and expectations; you may wish to have direct daily contact with the setting, helping us plan and set up daily activities that will help your child, or you may wish to stand back a bit to help your child gain independence.
- We sometimes run a special "Dads Week" to encourage more of our male carers, parents and grandparents to get involved.
- Your keyworker will discuss your expectations and needs, and will jointly plan a mutually acceptable way of working. This will be different for each family.
- We carry out surveys at the end of the school year to gather parents and carers views, so we can make improvements to our service.

## **14. Who can I contact for further information?**

- For a parent of a child already attending Heather Playgroup, this would be your keyworker.
- For more specific information about what we offer, and for those who are considering attending our setting, you can speak to:

Our SENCO, Mrs Anita Reeves, or  
Our Manager, Mrs Helen Wood.

You can contact us by phone on 01403 262320 or  
email [heatherplaygroup@googlemail.com](mailto:heatherplaygroup@googlemail.com)

Or have a look on our website [www.heatherplaygroup.co.uk](http://www.heatherplaygroup.co.uk)

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