



Self Assessment of our SEND Implementation

Feb 2019

*A new approach to special educational
needs and disability*



Early Years – Activity Led Funding development

What was the issue?

Funding for SEN Support in the Early Years

Setting SENCOS of Private, Voluntary and Independent early years settings in Torbay, are able to apply to Torbay Council for funding to ensure that the needs of young children with SEND are met.

SEND code of Practice:

5.59 Local authorities must ensure that all providers delivering funded early education places meet the needs of children with SEN and disabled children. In order to do this local authorities should make sure funding arrangements for early education reflect the need to provide suitable support for these children.

5.60 Early years providers should consider how best to use their resources to support the progress of children with SEN.

This year saw the introduction of the Activity Led Funding (ALFEY) Panel. This addressed a need to share the responsibility across the two teams (SEN and EYCAS) and to ensure transparency of processes.

Our journey so far....

In 2017-2018 the procedure to apply for funding for SEN Support (Activity led Funding in the Early Years – ALFEY) was revised.

Throughout the year, six panels were held, prior to each half term. Panel members included two EYCAS staff members, business support from the SEN team, the EYAT for Inclusion and two Setting SENCOS (different practitioners each panel) from early years settings in Torbay.

Prior to establishing the panel, applications were looked at solely by the Early Years Advisory Teacher for Inclusion and funding was administered through the Early Years & Childcare Advisory Service (EYCAS).

The terms of reference for the panel, the dates of the panels, application forms and a guidance document were made available on the Early Years Inclusion webpage.

A criteria system was already in place to support judgements made about applications for funding which continued to be used.

What have we done?

At each panel there is a business meeting to focus on the process and work together as a group, in developing the application process. The minutes of the meeting are recorded.

The process for applying for ALFEY is clearly laid out on the early years inclusion web page in the terms of reference. Applications can be made by all Setting SENCOS in PVI settings, for children with an identified SEND and where the setting practitioners can clearly illustrate that they are supporting the child at SEN Support.



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The guidance notes, clearly asks Setting SENCOS to provide evidence of support following the graduated response.

The issue of confidentiality has been carefully considered throughout the process. Parents sign applications giving their consent for information about their child to be shared with panel members. All applications are looked at by the panel members on the premises of Torbay Council. Setting SENCOS are invited to meet with the EYAT for Inclusion to look at applications prior to the panel.

The dates for last submission of applications were added to the website and the period between these and the panel, was extended from one week to two weeks. This has allowed panel members to have the time to look at applications thoroughly, prior to the panel.

In April 2018, the Setting SENCOS were asked for feedback about their experience of being on the ALFEY panel and their experience of using the application process. Information was collated and as a result a pilot, using an amended Part 2 ALFEY application form, was carried out for the August 2018 panel.

A revised and simpler criteria process for ALFEY was also piloted at the August panel.

In January 2019, examples of strong applications were shared with Setting SENCOS at the SEND and Vulnerable Children's Forum. The procedure was reinforced and a question and answer session was also held to deal with queries about the process.

What difference has this made?

The following table shows the outcomes of each panel held in 2017-2018 and the numbers of settings applying.

Panel	Applications accepted	Applications refused	Number of preschool/nursery settings applying	Childminders applying
August 2017	30	2	17	2
October 2017	13	3	10	0
December 2017	32	0	15	2
January 2018	16	6	14	1
March 2018	15	0	8	1
May 2018	18	7	10	0
Totals	124	18		

Throughout the year only 4 PVI preschool/nursery settings did not apply for ALFEY during this year. This suggests that the process is easily accessible and used by the majority of settings who are able to apply for ALFEY.

The changes to the Part 2 application form significantly improved the quality of the applications and so it replaced the original form on the website.



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Applications are considered in collaboration with a range of early years practitioners on the panel. All the panel members follow the same procedure which enables each application to be looked at in a fair and transparent way.

The revised criteria for ALFEY was adopted by the panel members as an agreed tool to help make judgements about the level of funding to be awarded in each case.

Applications not meeting the agreed criteria for funding are declined with a clear explanation given to the applicant in a written format.

Applications agreed to be at a lower level of need (level 1) have reduced. This has been mainly led by the Setting SENCOS on the panels as they have felt that the described needs and interventions were more at a 'universal level' rather than a 'targeted level' and therefore, did not meet the criteria for ALFEY.

Where the panel members have identified a specific course of action, the EYAT for Inclusion will communicate this with the Setting SENCOS involved. On most occasions this links to services available to families with children with SEND, found on the Torbay Local Offer and/or suggestions for targeted interventions or assessments.

The systematic timetabling of the ALFEY panel has enabled the EYAT for Inclusion and the EYCAS staff members to spend time in a more efficient way, looking at applications leading up to the panel rather than on a weekly basis, which was time consuming.

Areas for Further Action

Improving the quality of applications:

The process will continue to be analysed at each panel meeting and improvements if necessary, will be made and shared with the wider group of Setting SENCOS at the following SEND and Vulnerable Children's Forum.

A checklist has been introduced and will be made available on the early years inclusion webpage. The checklist lists specific documents or information that make up a strong application for Setting SENCOS to refer to.

Setting SENCOS requested a worked example to be made available on the website. This idea will be shared at the next ALFEY panel.

Improving access to ALFEY

There is a low number of child minders that apply for ALFEY. The EYAT for Inclusion will share the terms of reference for the ALFEY process with the child minders at their networks and make them aware of the Early Years Inclusion webpage with all the relevant information.

Immediate Next Steps



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Before the last panel of this academic year (2018-2019), volunteers from the group of Setting SENCOS will be invited to commit to attending one of the 6 ALFEY panels to be held during 2019-2020. Setting SENCOS who have not been part of the process before, will be encouraged to put themselves forward. The aim is that all early years Setting SENCOS will have contributed to an ALFEY panel in order to improve a better understanding of the process.

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