**Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) and the new extended free entitlement (EFE) for three and four year olds**

The EYFS states that providers of early education and childcare must:

* have arrangements in place to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
* have regard to the SEND Code of Practice 2015[[1]](#footnote-1)
* identify a member of staff to act as special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO)
* identify as early as possible any additional needs a child may have and strengthen links with colleagues, such as health visitors, who can support these needs.

Any settings operating a mixed model approach to delivering the extended hours entitlement (EFE) for three and four year olds will need to have these measures in place. There may be different levels of experience and training around SEND within each setting and this could be a positive learning experience for all of them.

The key to providing good quality care and education for children with SEND is taking time to understand the particular needs of the child concerned. Settings can do this through discussions with parents, GP and any other professionals supporting the child.

It is important that all settings follow the advice of professionals and work with a child consistently towards whatever goals have been set. Providers should communicate on a regular basis about approaches they have found successful with the child and his/her progress, preferably involving the child’s parents too.

Where funding for additional support is required for the child to be able to access a mainstream setting, the settings should apply for funding together and indicate that an equal level of funding is required in each setting.

Additionally, when a child has an additional need, the good information sharing protocols that permit everyone involved in the ongoing education of a child become more important than ever. There are a number of reasons for this:

* consistency in the approach to learning and behavioural/developmental issues is very important in order to achieve the best outcomes for children with SEND
* giving a common message in communication with parents is equally important and should be one that encourages a similar approach to tackling behavioural/developmental issues as well as learning from successful strategies that parents themselves have been employing at home
* for many years early education and childcare providers and local authorities have reported incidences of double referrals to specialist services such as speech and language support; good information sharing and ongoing communication between providers will avoid this
* all early years providers undertake formative (ongoing) assessments in their daily work with children, as well as summative (end of a stage) assessments as required by the EYFS; good communication ensures that there are no significant discrepancies in these assessments; this applies in the case of all children but it particularly significant in the case of a child with SEND

In conclusion, successful delivery of the EYFS statutory framework through the mixed model approach will require consistent co-operation, co-ordination and communication between all parties.

1. DfE (2015), Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years Statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities [↑](#footnote-ref-1)