



Case study - Relationship building and serving the community

What were your existing relationships with local partners like prior to becoming an Inclusion Hub?

At Kerswell kids, we have historically had a good relationship with the local Children's Centre (Heathfield Children's Centre). We had a good relationship which was built out of being invited to and attending the Multi Professional meetings at Heathfield Children's Centre, we also communicated with one another when support was needed; for example, we once had a child at our setting who had a lot going on with the family and had particular social needs, we did not feel fully equipped to support the child and turned to Heathfield Children's Centre to seek further support and professional input. The Lead Practitioner from the Children's Centre offered her help and came to our setting to meet the family and signposted them to additional support.

Over the years, the need to work with or consult the Children's Centres has decreased as our own knowledge, skills, training and access to the Local Offer has increased, enabling us to support parents and depend less on the support and expertise of the Children's Centre.

How did the Inclusion Hub project help you with developing or strengthening relationships with local partners?

Kerswell Kids is one of a number of Early Years settings that has gone through, from 2018-2019, a rigorous process of upskilling in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), known as the Inclusion Hub Project.

The project gave us the opportunity to think about how we were going to use the skills and knowledge we had acquired with children who have complex needs and need it the most. At Kerswell Kids, we don't always have the most complex children and so we thought about reaching out to our local partners to offer our support and newly enhanced skills in supporting children with SEND. We know that the services that Children's Centres offer are extremely crucial and so we began having discussions with Heathfield Children's Centre to find out what we at Kerswell Kids can offer to children with complex needs at the Children's Centre.

It was highlighted by the Lead Practitioner that they have a high level of children with different needs at Heathfield Children's Centre, but they do not currently have a sensory room which could really benefit some of these children.

We instantly knew that this is something that we could potentially offer the Children's Centre, by adapting the space that we have at Kerswell Kids. We currently have a quiet room that we use for speech and language in the morning and this space is usually available and empty in the afternoon. We are now looking at utilising the space in the afternoon to offer a sensory room to children at Heathfield Children's Centre who would benefit from this type of provision.

What are the benefits of this relationship and how will this impact on the local community (children and families?)

Dependent on the needs of the child and family, we can potentially offer these afternoon sessions as an hour of respite for parents, whilst we work with the children, or alternatively it can be an opportunity for parents to attend with their children, helping parents to take back some strategies and new skills to use in the home. We think it is very important to adapt this to the needs of the families.

Do you have any future plans for this relationship?

At Kerswell Kids, we see that it is essential that we continue to develop and strengthen the relationship with our local partners by going to Mutli Professional meetings and continuing to turn to each other for support. The relationship should be one that is constantly evolving as we all work out how we can each fill in the gaps in our provisions and offer the best possible service to children and their families.