

Title: Special Educational Needs - Early Identification and Intervention

Background

1. On 12 March 2004, the South West Wales Regional Committee discussed the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee's review of special educational needs, at its meeting in Pontardawe.
2. The Committee received evidence from the Head Teacher of Ysgol Hendre; the Head Teacher of Blaenymaes Primary School; the Director of Education and Community Services of Pembrokeshire County Council; the Head of the School of Education Studies at Trinity College; the Area Manager of SNAP Cymru; and the Head of Speech and Language Therapy Services at Pembrokeshire and Derwen NHS Trust.

Issues Raised

3. The main points arising from the presentations and discussion were:
 - Parents are often unable to take their children for speech therapy appointments, so an initiative to provide speech therapy services within schools would be welcomed
 - Parental involvement in the process of SEN provision was crucial
 - Statements protected education provision for children with SEN by ensuring that the necessary resources were in place
 - Good links between primary and secondary schools were essential to ensure a smooth transition for children
 - There were difficulties in providing SEN through the medium of Welsh due to the shortage of trained bi-lingual staff. Training needed to be provided more flexibly, so that people in relatively remote communities could train on their own area
 - Flexible refresher courses for teachers were needed to allow them to train in the evenings and at weekends
 - Parents were often unconvinced that investigations into allegations of bullying were conducted fairly, and so an independent assessment would be useful
 - SNAP aimed to reach less able parents by working with schools to give information and support at the right times
 - Educational support for multi sensory impairment pupils varied between education authorities
 - SEN was an integral part of any education service

- Parents wanted to see more information sharing between staff within the school and between schools and other agencies involved
- Multi agency funded services worked effectively, but access to these services varied between local authorities
- Parents wanted to be offered more training and awareness of their children's SEN

4. Alison Williams of Gors Community School highlighted the nurturing group at her school, which concentrated on the early identification of behavioural problems.

5. Kath Brown said that learning support assistants in mainstream schools in Pembrokeshire were taught in groups to help children with speech and language difficulties, but there were not enough speech and language therapists to teach all LSAs.

6. SNAP highlighted some of the issues parents felt still needed improvement, including delays in referral for assessment, the lack of proper reviews and evaluations of children's progress and the feeling of intimidation.

Conclusion

7. The Committee is invited to note the issues raised when considering the evidence received as part of its review of Special Educational Needs.

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