

Hello, I am writing Lavey Early Years Playgroup. An early years setting for children aged 3-4 in their preschool year.

I see we have missed the deadline to submit feedback for the Inquiry into a Strategic Review of Current SEN Provision and Transformation agenda. However if at all possible we would love if our views could still be considered.

We are a rural community lead playgroup with 30+ years experience facilitating high standards of early years education to children and their families. Our staff are highly trained and really well experienced. In recent years we have seen an increase in SEN and unfortunately this year we have found ourselves wanting to write to you with deep concerns for lack of services, availability of statutory assessments, statements and timely support for our children. As we all know, quite often sen needs are not identified until children enter into education. But many do. None the less, we the playgroups and their parents strive to meet the needs of children and ensure their right to education is not only protected but embraced, empowered and potentials are achieved. We find time and time again that the delay in assessment, for 1-1 supports is far too long.

I wish to provide brief anonymous detail of a child in our setting recently to highlight concern and disappointment in the system.

This child attended our setting last year, non verbal with delays in development. He is known to a number of health professionals including paediatrics. This child made great progress in our setting with our setting providing 1-1 supports ourselves (note as above we are community led so this was community funds) ea did offer some support sessions in our setting too. In may/june 2025 this parent was strongly advised by health professionals to defer his place to p1. This is clearly supported by ea as there is an option to defer. Child was open to ea psychology too where this was discussed and agreed as a viable option. So parents felt they had no choice but to defer due to Sen needs and have child repeat his preschool year.

We are now at the end of Nov and this child is not funded to repeat this. Why? Why is there an option to defer if this child is not going to be funded to defer. We have been told when this child finally gets their statement the place will be funded. But why not now? Why not in September? Why not when the option to defer is there. This family are now in a position where they felt they had no option but to defer but are having to pay for a place. The place he knew and was familiar with had space, staff knew him and welcomed his return. But at a cost to the family because he deferred. And this all feels so bitter, as the family have chosen to defer due to SEN. Well established, well agreed and well evidenced Sen. We feel this is not good enough and a huge gap in service.

With these concerns I do want to acknowledge the good work being done to address these gaps. I do wish to highlight a positive factor we avail of. We have 5 out of 30 children with already identified special educational needs in our setting this year. We were successful in the childcare partnership fair play small grant scheme two years in a row. This allowed us to hire one additional member of staff for 2.5 hours per day to essentially act as second hands of support for children with Sen. This is remarkably positive and has a tremendous impact on how well we can facilitate education. I would pose the question though, why must service waits, assessments, procedures and statements take so long to create these gaps in the first place. We do hope for an easier process all round and really welcome this inquiry. If you

would like any further information from us, positive or with insights please do let us know.  
We have a team of very motivated, enthusiastic and experienced staff willing to talk.

Thank you

Carmel Milne,

Chairperson

Lavey Early Years

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