

SEND Stay and Play

What is SEND Stay and Play?

- Stay and Play is where young children can have fun in a secure, non-judgemental space where parent carers feel supported.
- It is for children aged 2-5 with SEND: they do not need to have a diagnosis but need to be starting the process and waiting for a Child Development Centre (CDC) appointment.
- The SEND Stay and Play project is an initiative between Early Years SEND and Inclusion and SEND Commissioning.
- It started in September 2023 and there are now groups in Crawley, Worthing, Shoreham, Lancing and Haywards Heath.

Stay and Play is for children aged 2-5 with SEND, children do not need to have a diagnosis but need to be starting the process and waiting for a Child Development Centre (CDC) appointment. The best referral route is for parent carers to email me direct, but I can take referrals from professionals too with parental consent.

Children have fun in a secure, non-judgemental space and parent carers feel supported by me but much more importantly by each other. Many have formed friendships and meet outside of Stay and Play, building valuable networks of support.

SEND Stay and Play supports new children and families by offering a phone call to discuss child's interests and to discuss any concerns. They are sent photos of the building they will be attending and a photo of myself to help familiarise themselves before attending. Also, there is the option to arrive early when the group is quiet to help settling in. Parent carers can arrive late and leave early if needed, bring snacks and drinks or anything that might help their child settle.

To date the project has supported 121 children and their families.

I encourage other professionals to visit SEND stay and play including;

- Oral Health Nurse
- Portage home visitors
- The Library Service (to share information about the Disability register and who share their lovely sensory stories with the SEND stay and play families)
- Reaching Families.
- Early Years Child Care Advisors and Mentors
- Speech and language Therapy Assistant.

Feedback is always very positive from professionals visiting the group with some saying what a lovely supportive group and how beneficial it is to see the children in a different environment particularly if they are not attending any other Early Years settings. Parent carers also benefit from knowing what's available and hearing what other services have to

offer. Families have accessed specialist dentist care through meeting the Oral Health Nurse in the sessions and have attended Reaching Families training courses and signed up to the Disability Register.

'Thank you for having us! 'M' really enjoyed it and it was nice to be around like minded people going through the same thing as us! We really appreciate that you have been able to offer this as the other SEN sessions 'M' attends are set up by businesses and not people who can appreciate our situation and help with support for our little ones! We look forward to making this a regular part of our week'.

'Thank you for the photo really appreciate it. 'A' recognised you straight away which was nice and the interaction he had was great.'

'I wanted to thank you for your time and all your effort in helping us with "T"! We think very highly of you, and I think you are extremely compassionate and knowledgeable in what you do! Hopefully our paths cross again.'

Feedback from parent carers who have attended SEND Stay and Play

To book on the SEND Stay and Play programme, email Donna Brigden (Donna.Brigden@westsussex.gov.uk). Parent carers can self-refer by emailing me direct. Places are limited and applicants will be advised if a place is available or whether they have been placed on the waiting list.