

## Kids Navigator model - tailored help and guidance

A significant challenge for parents in getting the right help for their child is navigating a complex health, care and education system. Kids pioneered and tested the SEND Navigator model in one local area to provide a single point of contact for rounded support and guidance to ease the burden on families. The SEND Navigators worked in partnership with the family to build a personalised support plan, before providing practical and emotional support, connecting families with local services and working to help the family access the right provision and support. A strong and effective early intervention, Kids later started to integrate the model into other services, including the inclusive nursery in Basingstoke, Hampshire, where tailored support for the families makes a real difference.

### **Kids Navigators in the community**

The Kids SEND Navigator community project was set up in 2021, originally through start-up funding from Birmingham Forward Steps and subsequently bolstered by voluntary income. Over three years, we have helped more than 400 families with one or more children with SEND with:

- Information and advice: routine, behaviour, sleep, eating, emotional wellbeing
- Play in the home, including sensory activities
- Connecting with professionals: Early Support and Inclusion Service, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language
- Support to apply for financial support, e.g. Disability Living Allowance, carer's allowance, Family Fund grants
- Support to actively participate in meetings with professionals/multiple agencies
- Emotional wellbeing support and mindfulness.

Most referrals come from health visitors; others come from family support services or statutory services.

#### How much did it cost?

The salary costs of a SEND Navigator for 36 hours per week were £36,973 per year. They could take a case load of 20 families at any one time – anticipated at 60 families per year. This works out at a cost of £616 per family, assuming we work with each one for 12 weeks, though this is not universal as we worked with some families for longer periods.

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## What was the impact?

These families have been supported to get on the right track from the very start of their SEND journey and get into the system, saving more costly interventions in future and keeping families together. Helping to avert future crisis, this support:

- Reduces isolation and increases peer support.
- Increases parental knowledge, confidence and emotional wellbeing.
- Integrates families into the system more easily
- Reaches parents who professionals have struggled to connect with.
- Takes a whole family approach and supports everyone within the household.
- Identifies safeguarding concerns that may otherwise be missed, meaning referrals can be made to appropriate agencies.

## Case Study

K, aged 4, has an autism diagnosis and digestive problems. Mum has a diagnosis of ADHD, autism and anxiety. The family faced numerous challenges in overcoming the difficulties presented by K's behaviour and poor sleep pattern. There had been a history of missed communications between professionals and between professionals and Mum. Mum had developed an extreme distrust of professionals because of this. At the time of referral K's sleep pattern was very poor and he was sleeping 3-4 hours per night. K's digestive problems were not under control and causing a lot of pain. K displayed a lot of sensory seeking behaviours and had very limited communication either verbally or using alternative forms of communication. K and his younger sister could spend very little time together as he became aggressive towards her.

The Kids SEND Navigator team received a referral from a Family Support Worker at the local Children's Centre. As part of the triage process, the team recognised that K would also benefit from attending their local Kids Family Group. The team at Family Group identified that K needed to be referred to the Early Years Inclusion Support Service (EYIS) and worked closely with them to successfully apply for an EHCP.

SEND Navigator Amy began supporting K after he had completed a block of sessions with the Family Group and was just about to start Reception in a mainstream school.

Support given included:

- In-depth Information and Advice: Amy provided guidance on K's sleep, communication, sensory seeking behaviour and emotional wellbeing. She equipped Mum with improved knowledge and tools to better understand and address K's needs.
- Practical Support: Amy recommended and modelled sensory activities and play strategies to engage K and help improve his relationship with his sister. Amy

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also gave suggestions about ways to respond to K's challenging behaviour which was affecting his school attendance, along with his poor sleep pattern. Amy recommended sleep hygiene and routine strategies and referred Rebecca for more specialist support. K's sleep and school attendance were beginning to improve by the end of the support given.

K's mainstream school setting was not appropriate for his needs and Amy supported Mum to attend meetings to challenge the setting named on his EHCP and visit Special Schools. This practical support gave Mum the ability to navigate the difficult journey of accessing a special school placement and enabled K to develop his ability to interact with peers and develop his communication skills.

- **Connecting with Professionals:** Amy attended meetings arranged between school and other health professionals involved with the family. Amy advocated for Mum and K in these meetings as Mum initially did not have the confidence to speak out, however her confidence grew as she built a relationship with Amy and the school staff. Through school initiating an early help plan and Amy supporting Mum to engage with this and the Family Support Worker, the joined up working dramatically improved Mum's relationship with school, access to local health services and K's school attendance.
- **Emotional Wellbeing Support:** Amy recognised that Mum was dealing with a lot of stress due to K's needs, the challenge with accessing an appropriate school placement and a poor relationship with school staff. Along with practical support, Amy provided a listening ear and suggested wellbeing activities. This helped Mum to prioritise self-care more and gave her greater patience and ability to implement strategies needed to help K.

## **Kids Navigators in a nursery setting**

Kids Basingstoke nursery is a vibrant and inclusive environment for children aged between 3 months and 5 years old where we bring disabled and non-disabled children together, encouraging them to explore, interact, and grow alongside one another.

We currently have three members of staff fulfilling the Navigator role at the nursery – all three hold a senior or management post. They identify and support children and families to navigate processes and systems and help them to achieve and strive for the correct and appropriate support and provision. Working directly with the children and staff in the setting they provide coordinated and responsive support to families of children with disabilities or complex health needs. At Basingstoke, the Early Years SEND Navigator is part of a continuum of support and expertise within a well-trained nursery team.

The Kids Navigators are crucial to babies and toddlers with SEND receiving early interventions and support that enable them to gain the best start in life. They work alongside the parent/family to explain why they are making the referral and what they feel the child's needs or disability may entail.

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Navigators are also key members of multi-agency 'district teams' in the local area. They attend district team meetings alongside the local authority education team, care and health professionals and work collaboratively to identify any potential needs or SEND as early as possible, and decide on the most appropriate placements for children. This information is fed into the SEN Hub and a number of those identified children are then allocated a place at the nursery as part of the commissioned SEN Hub local authority contract.

Navigators will:

- Work with the child providing regular support and care in the nursery environment as well as providing the family with information and advice on routines, behaviour, sleep, eating, emotional wellbeing, and play in the home, including sensory activities.

- Draw up detailed child-centred support plans including Behaviour Support Plans.

- Support and guide parents to apply for financial or health and care support such as Disability Living Allowance, diagnostic assessments, and medical appointments.

- Arrange appointments and therapies for children and families from other professionals such as Early Support and Inclusion Service, Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language, health specialists, children's services, and hospital staff.

- Support parents to actively participate in meetings with professionals including Child protection/services, Team around the Family, and social worker appointments.

- Support parents to apply for and navigate the EHCP process and increasingly are attending EHCP annual review and Tribunal meetings with families.

- Use their expertise and knowledge of the child to aid decisions around which setting is most appropriate for each child to transition to when they leave the nursery. Work with mainstream and special schools to ensure a seamless transition to the next setting.

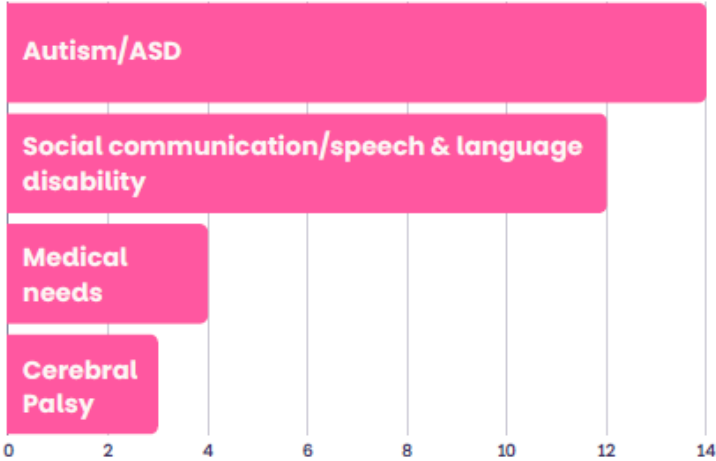
- Attend all hospital/health appointments for assessment with the family (most referrals for assessments are currently for autism, global developmental delay, and medical conditions.)

# Navigator interventions and impact

The below figures demonstrate the outcomes and impact of the work of the Navigators across the first year of funding. These outcomes reflect the Navigators' work from September 2022 to September 2023.



Of the 36 supported, the following was the primary diagnosis:



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# Outcomes from Navigator support

The following outcomes were achieved from the Navigators:

<b>20</b>	<b>EHCs applied for and awarded</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Supported in TAF (team around family) meetings</b>
<b>16</b>	<b>Behaviour Support Plans</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>Meetings with social workers</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>NHS speech support</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>Parent support meetings</b>
<b>28</b>	<b>DLA Applications completed (these are key to receiving Disability Access Fund)</b>		

