



Building Blocks

Exploring the barriers and facilitators to early learning and childcare for children with learning disabilities in Scotland



The Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities' (SCLD) vision is of a fairer Scotland where people with learning disabilities live full, safe, loving and equal lives.



SCLD is an intermediary organisation for the learning disability sector in Scotland.

SCLD is a delivery partner to the Scottish Government in the implementation of Scotland's learning disability strategies, *The keys to life (2013)* and *Towards Transformation (2021)*.

Background & research aims

- Importance of early years recognised in *The keys to life*
- Increase in funded ELC hours from 600 – 1140
- UNCRC passage into Scots law
- Anecdotal evidence that parents were not using funded hours
- Why?



Research Methods

- 14 semi-structured interviews with 15 parents
- 5 semi-structured interviews with LA early years leads
- 1 semi-structured interview with a child development centre worker
- A self-complete survey of childcare providers, with 73 responses



Local Authority Early Years Leads

- Importance of engaging early
- Good relationships with NHS and social work teams
- Eligible 2s
- Clarity with providers over duties
- Roll out of 1140 leading to less choice



Nurseries & Childminders

- Majority had cared for children with LD
- Around 60% confident their setting was able
 - Need more training, within work hours
 - Support from external specialists reactive
 - More staff
 - Inappropriate facilities
- Good training and CPD, close relationships with specialists and previous experience leads to confidence





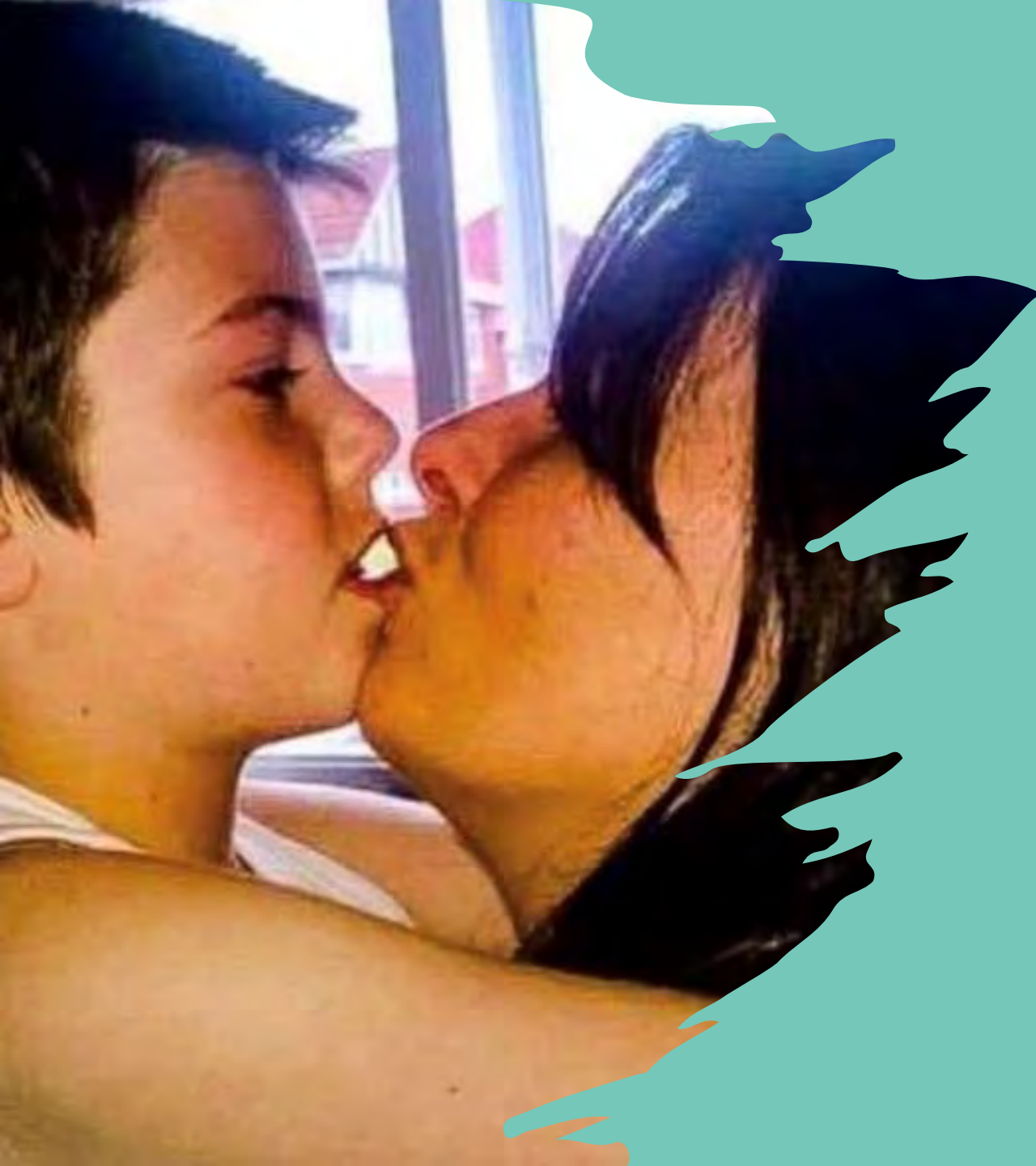
Parent's Perspectives

Difficulties finding information about support and entitlements in a complex system

"I just feel for children who are born into this from a disadvantaged background and don't have the support to know what they are entitled to. You really have to work to find it."

- Parental knowledge of/ability to navigate the system
- More difficult without 'diagnosis'
- Conflicting information around early entrant places
- Parental advocates/post diagnostic support





The challenge to get the right support in place

"I am perfectly aware of my son's needs. He would need a one-to-one. It wouldn't be a case of the budget doesn't cover it."

- Reduction in specialist provision
- Lack of one-to-one support
- One-to-one support used to maintain ratios

Inequity of provision

"I don't think it's great that if he'd been a typical child, he can go from 9-3 every day, but they refused his one-to-one for five days a week."

- Wraparound provision not available in specialist settings
- Early entrant places not available in specialist settings
- One-to-one support not funded within extended hours
- Split/blended placements not allowing a mix of mainstream and specialist





Good leadership and staff attitude

"It was the positive attitude of the manager from the start. She is always striving for what's best, and an inclusive environment."

- Good leadership fosters good relationships and communication
- Proactively seeking input from external specialists and training opportunities
- Instances where providers stated they would not be able to provide a placement

Open dialogue with parents

“We’d want them to be honest and be open to listening to us when we say what to do but also ask us to show them again if they forget.”

- Trial and error can be necessary
- Parents feel as though they are a nuisance
- Parents not seen as experts





Well trained staff

“Even things like making it part of your training that you should do one day in an additional needs nursery.”

- Appeal of specialist provision due to staff training and desire to work with children
- Pupil Support Assistants have no specific training
- Staff have to give up their own time for training

Appropriate sized settings/staff ratios

“If it was a massive nursery, I would have looked for specialist provision.”

- Specialist provision by nature are intimate settings
- Staff ratios do not account for child’s development
- Stage rather than age appropriate





Thank you

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