

Down's syndrome is the most common form of learning disability; It is caused by a chromosome abnormality, where the child will receive three chromosomes rather than the normal two. It is also known as Trisomy 21 - about 1 in every 600 babies born each year has Down's syndrome (Doherty and Hughes, 2009).

Bates (2004) expresses how children with down's syndrome will encounter a decline in their cognitive development; visual, auditory, sensory. This can result in difficulties in speech and language, as well as deterioration in motor skills such as holding their heads up steady and walking. Buckley and Sacks (2001) also explain how they can suffer bowel abnormalities and are susceptible to eye problems and to illness' like leukaemia. Because of this, a child with Down's syndrome is less likely to be able to express their concerns, emotions or ideas.

Early Intervention Foundation. (2019) states the definition of Early Intervention can be to engage in children's and/or young people's life at the earliest possible stage, despite whether a problem has already emerged or not. The purpose of Early Intervention programmes is to provide and support children and young people with appropriate equipment - social, emotional, physical- to start or continue their life with the best possibilities. It is important that early intervention is enforced at the earliest possible stage because as highlighted by Understood (2014). Children, especially those in the Early Years sector benefit when the developing brain is most capable of change and receptive learning. The first five years of a child's life is crucial for their brain and nervous system development, during this time children learn and develop rapidly. It is therefore imperative and vital that early intervention is recognized and identified in a child so that the necessary programme for remedial action can be taken. (Bee and Boyd, 2004)

Children have fewer rights of the kind which adults take for granted: freedom of physical/mental integrity, speech, information, association, thought, conscience and religion. More so, children with Additional learning needs who may not have the ability to have or do any of these factors. Children with Down's Syndrome are highly reliant on the adults and peers around them. (Alderson, 2002b)

Article 3 of the UNCRC (1989) states that the best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children. Parents and families of children who may have additional learning needs would also welcome the earliest of interventions from the Local Authorities (Education Reform Act, 1988). For example, the child's educational setting, to provide the necessary support so that everyone is singing from the same hymn sheet to rectify matters at the quickest opportunity. Children with Down's Syndrome do require that extra support within a setting.

Early intervention is far easier to enforce nowadays with thanks to The Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Educational Tribunal Act.

Snap Cymru (2020) underlines that the overarching aims of the new regime is to consolidate, that is, produce a single, coherent set of proposals to rationalize the different protocols currently being used. It will provide guidance to settings and the professionals attending in what is expected of them in the delivery of the act. It also states that parents should be made aware of what to expect from their ALNCo's and the setting in providing their child support. Furthermore, the children's needs will be endorsed by a new-found statutory document called an *Individual Development Plan* (Dauncey, 2016); it will indicate the needs and actions which need to be taken to assist with that particular child's needs; as soon as the additional needs are identified, practitioner in settings will map out an *Individual Development Plan* tailored to provide the crucial support and guidance that the individual child might require to develop their skills and support them further.

Article 28 of the UNCRC (1989) Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free. Expanded on with Article 29 of the UNCRC (1989) which states that education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

Some argue that observations and assessments are invaluable in early intervention. However, others say it could be more valuable for Individual Development Plan's to become integral to planning for all children, having regard for Every Child Matters (2003) outcome and the Early Years Foundation Stage framework (2015), which both merit individualised learning and development.

By early intervention future challenges including behaviour, health and cognitive development can be averted at a later stage thus enabling the children to be part of the mainstream education structure. Research conducted by Donaldson (2015) lead to the new curriculum being introduced by the Welsh Government (2019) and highpoints how the six new areas of learning will allow every pupil regardless of their ability and other factors, an inclusive education designed for the future needs of everyone involved.

Additional learning needs is complex, dynamic and multidimensional. Children with Down's syndrome have many people working with them and have done from the beginning of their life. Over a lifetime they will have met many doctors, nurses, support workers, school staff, social workers etc. All Wales Child Protection (2009) illustrates the many benefits of an intervention from the multi agencies within an early years setting, including: Improving progress, A happier learning

environment, Increasing emotional wellbeing, Raising confidence and self-esteem, Providing focussed and targeted support, Supporting teaching and support staff , Prevention of future interventions.

Thus, when early intervention is understood, it means that it targets specific children who have an identified need for additional support once their problems have already begun to develop but before they become serious (Early Intervention Foundation ,2020). It aims to stop those problems from becoming permanent and thus to prevent children and young people from experiencing unnecessarily enduring or serious consequences. The sooner that these problems are nipped in the bud the less of an issue it becomes in the long term. (Keenan, 2002)

Having a disability means that the person is living in society as part of a minority group. A child with Down's Syndrome often encounters a sense of exclusion from able bodied children. Unlike other Additional Learning Needs, the characteristics of a child with Down's Syndrome is more physically noticeable. Therefore, in a mainstream early year setting, a child with Down's Syndrome is likely to face exclusion because their peers may not be familiar with their kind of disabilities at their present age and practitioners may not be familiar with their methods of learning... (Meggitt, Stevens and Bruce, 2000) Also, Smith, Cowie and Blades (2004) say this may be the first time some children have seen a child with down's syndrome and the first time practitioners have worked with a child with down' syndrome, so they would likely exclude the child but only out of the fear of the unknown.

Integration and inclusion are bringing people of diverse abilities and background together (Bruce and Meggitt, 1999) The principles of inclusivity are presented as all children having their needs met in the best possible way for them, being part of the community. The Children Act (1989) fosters the integration of disabled children within mainstream settings, although they may need further help or support in some areas.

Settings should shift their focus from the idea of disability in order to work to remove barriers of participation for all students (Barton & Armstrong, 2001 as cited in Ypinazar & Pagliano, 2004).

Exclusion is only a small hurdle; it does not have to be an everlasting barrier. A student with Down syndrome is more likely to experience success and a sense of worth in an educational setting where inclusion both embraced and supported as part of the school culture, and where the different learning needs of all the students are acknowledged and properly addressed (Antia and Levine (2001)

Furthermore, Welsh Assembly Government. (2004) Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales states that Participation in education is a process that will need all children being given the chance to make choices and to understand that their views matter. Children should feel assured that they will be listened to and that their viewpoints are valued and that they are included with day to day activities.

Department of Education (2012b) says that the Early years foundation stage seeks to provide... equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice. Ensuring that every child is included and supported. Similarly, Brown (1998) declares A practitioner can encourage a child with Down's syndrome self-image, as well their image to everyone else by first regarding them as a child, their disability second.

A review of the literature in 2007, Levitas et al. (in their report The Multi-dimensional Analysis of Social Exclusion for the last government's social exclusion task force) describes exclusion as:

Social exclusion is a complex and multi-dimensional process. It involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities.

We have previously stated how children in the Early Years are in the process of developing. Developing their personalities, attitudes and growth. Lindon (2012b) finds good practice includes a vigorous approach to equality; ensuring all are welcome and that any issues are addressed without delay in order to limit exclusion.

Experiences of exclusion can have negative outcomes in terms of emotional and behavioural health on a child, (Buhs and Ladd, 2001; Killen and Rutland, 2011), academic trouble, a decrease in social behaviour (Coyne et al., 2011), and low self-esteem (Stanley and Arora, 1998).

However, research conducted by Devarakonda (2013) illustrates that there are benefits which can come from inclusion. His model of inclusion shows it; removes barriers, provides equal opportunities, Earns Respect, overcoming exclusion and Diversity, Allows the celebration of differences, to name a few. Furthermore, researchers have uncovered that children with

disabilities such as Down's syndrome who interact with peers of a higher- level skill set and understanding of different subject matters often imitate these behaviours and skills in the future (Banda, Hart, and Liu- Gitz, 2010; Holahan and Costenbader, 2000).

On the plus side, children with Down's syndrome are very social. They benefit from attendance at an early year's settings as they respond well to encouragement. A theory founded by Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes the importance of learning for a child when it occurs through social interaction with a skilful adult or its peers. And A practitioner may model behaviours and/or provide verbal instructions for the child. Vygotsky refers to this as cooperative or collaborative dialogue. The child begins to recognise the actions or instructions provided by the practitioner/ peers then suppress the information, using it to guide or regulate their own performance. We have previously touched upon how all children work at different abilities; how they hold diverse levels of knowledge, values and skills. Therefore, the More Knowledgeable can be anyone from adult to child. However, it is very likely that a child with Down's syndrome will be the Zone of Proximal Development. Unless, of course, they are educating the able- bodied children on subject matters such as Additional Learning Needs and all that comes with it.

In summary, inclusivity for children with Additional Learning needs is achievable with the right attitude, support and knowledge.

One of the key principle values of an early years setting is that practitioners merit individuality, allowing all children opportunities to explore, experiment and enhance. When practitioners plan activities they must consider the large range of diversity within- as well as their similarities. (Pugh, 1996).

Laming (2003) states that practitioners must not avoid teaching/learning in worry of offending someone but rather, adapt their way of teaching in order to support that individuals needs, understanding and knowledge.

In fact, all practice should meet individual's needs. However, reasonable adjustment must be made for those with disabilities but must ensure they are included and a valued member of the setting (Brown, 1998). The core point of being supportive is to celebrate all differences and value them. Disability Discrimination Act (1995) was created under advisement of the National Disability Council (NDC) and has and continues to provide disabled children and adults new rights. For example, in areas such as education and care.

A child centred pedagogy is the foundation to a solid support system, and it has been proven to give children the opportunity to better their holistic development. This can be obtained through the provision of a curriculum that meets children's Social, Emotional, Physical needs, which early years settings have been doing through numerous activities intact with the Foundation Phase Framework (2015).

Children with Down's syndrome often have shorter concentration spans than their peers. They also have more difficulty processing input from more than one sense at a time (e.g. copying and listening), which inhibits their ability to focus. These difficulties are particularly apparent in the early years and many youngsters with Down's syndrome may be distractible, flitting from one activity to another. The less focused and more informal the situation, the more difficult it will be for the young child to channel attention into one activity for a length of time. However, children with Down's syndrome do respond well to structure and routine and are able to learn these well. Teaching them the routine and structure of their day with the aid of strong, clear visual cues (e.g. photographs and objects of reference) can help children learn. By these means, they can understand their environment better, learn appropriate behaviour for particular sessions and activities and predict the next activity. Difficulties with understanding verbal explanations and instructions are also overcome. This bridges the gap with a report written by Donaldson (2015) thrived on the idea that all children should have equal opportunities and should be supported within their own personal, individual needs.

The new curriculum which will be introduced to setting as of 2022 by the Welsh Government (2019) caters to the notion of an individual child and will enforce practitioners to support each child on their own progress not that of the whole class. Furthermore, Children with Down Syndrome can be assimilated with their peers in the nursery or classroom setting so long as the teacher responsible for the child is aware of the programme of support- the IDP , if relevant.

This allows practitioners to "scaffold" children's learning. Intervening and assisting at a level appropriate to that child. Bruner Careful observation will determine the competence already

achieved and thus, what can be within grasp when given assistance. Therefore, being able to provide the accurate amount of support relevant, excluding the notion of unnecessary support for children who may not need it in comparison. As a result, for a child with down's syndrome, there will be no sense of falling behind or working on different levels as no to children will be in the same place academically.

Overall and to conclude , a child with Down's Syndrome will have a better experience within an early years setting if early intervention is enforced, the child is made to feel valued and included In any matters that may affect them and if they have the right support system around them.

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