

# IDENTIFYING AND SUPPORTING CHILDREN IN THE EARLY YEARS WITH SEND

## A GUIDE FOR PROVIDERS



This guide aims to:

- Explain what SEND is, the legislations surrounding it and how to identify children with additional needs
- Strategies to support you to support children with SEND
- Explain the Graduated Approach and how it can be applied to the children that are in your setting

## What is Special Educational Needs and Disability?

The SEND Code of Practice (2015), says a “*child or young person has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.*”

The word ‘provision’ is anything you are providing for the children in your setting. For children aged two or above, special educational provision is educational provision or specialist training that is additional to or different from that made generally for other children of the same age. For a child under two, special educational provision means educational provision of any kind.

To help you decide whether concerns around a child’s development is special educational needs, it might be helpful to think whether the child will need specialist provision or support when they start school.



## Legislation and Key Documents

All early year’s providers are required to have arrangements in place to identify and support children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). There are 2 key documents which inform you of your statutory duties and responsibilities for children with SEND.

**The SEND Code of Practice (2015)** – this is the main guidance for supporting children and young people with SEND. All providers of early years education are required to have regard to this code. Some of the requirements in the code state ‘**must**’ (these are statutory requirements with which you must comply) and others state ‘**should**’ (these are requirements that you should follow them, unless you have an exceptional reason not to). Key guidance for Early Years Providers includes:

- You are encouraged to identify a person to act as the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo).
- Have clearly stated procedures for identifying and meeting the needs of children with SEN
- Work closely with parents and carers
- Implement a four-stage process known as the graduated approach to meeting individual needs
- Work with outside agencies and other professionals

All staff in the setting must make sure they are familiar with your policies for identifying and supporting children with SEND.

**The Equality Act (2010)** – this act protects children with a disability that are in your setting. Under this act, you must make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to ensure children with a disability are included and not at a disadvantage. This act also applies to parent and carers of children that attend your setting, that are covered by the Equality Act. Under this act, the reasonable adjustments duty includes three key requirements:

- to make adjustments to any provision, criterion or practice
- to make alterations to physical features
- to provide auxiliary aids and services

### **Key People in your setting**

Setting SENCO – *The EYFS (2017) expects non-maintained group settings to identify a member of staff as Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo). The responsibilities for this role are detailed in the SEND Code of Practice. You should make parents/carers aware of who the SENCO is in your setting.*



Key Person – *The EYFS (2017) requires that every child is assigned a key person to ensure that their individual needs are met. The setting SENCO is there to advise and support them.*

Area SENCO/Early Years SEND Advisors – *As your Local Authority, we have responsibility for supporting you when you have a child or children with additional needs. The Area SENCO supports you as a setting with unnamed support and an Early Years SEND Advisor supports specific children with high levels of additional needs.*

### **Welcoming children with SEND and their families**

It is likely that you may be the first person, outside of the family, with whom parents have left their child. This can be frightening for many parents but even more so for parents of children with SEND. It is important to reassure them that their child is welcome and that you will work with them, as parents, at every stage. It is ok to say you are not familiar or have experience with their child’s needs, parents value your honesty. Take the time to listen to the information they give you and ask questions. It is also useful to ask for names and contact details of professionals that are currently involved.

Here are some tips to help make a good first impression and a lasting positive relationship:

- Arrange a time when you can meet with parents/carers and the child, preferably somewhere quiet and distraction free. It is often helpful to have some toys for the child and his/her siblings. It is also helpful to have other staff in the setting be on hand to play with the children.
- Ask the questions you would ask about any child – who is important to them? What do they like to do as a family? What does the child like to do? What do they like to eat? Do they sleep well?
- Ask questions about what the child needs to support them; remember, parents know their child the best.
- Ask about other professionals who are involved and ask if you can contact them
- Get permission for you to contact other support services that aren't currently involved

In some cases, it may be that you have concerns about a child's development and will want to discuss this with parents. This will always be easier if you discuss children's progress with parents on a regular basis. Remember to use the graduated approach booklets to help you have these difficult conversations.



### **Inclusive Practice**

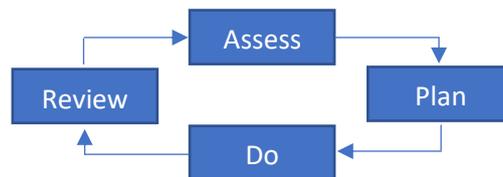
'Inclusion' describes actively promoting participation and reducing the barriers that children with SEND may experience while they are in your care. You should regularly reflect on how inclusive your practice is. Some of the aspects you should consider include:

- Do all staff make the environment welcoming to everyone?
- Can everybody physically access the outdoor provision?
- How accessible is the environment, including access to resources to encourage independence?
- Are your seating arrangements appropriate?
- Have you considered your toileting/changing/washing facilities?
- Have you considered sensory issues children may have including sensitivity to light or sound?
- How can you encourage opportunities for independence?
- Have you considered:
  - Timing of activities in your day?
  - Range/appropriateness of choices available?
  - Routine for dropping off or picking up children?
  - How transitions from one activity to another are undertaken?

Often very simple changes can make all the difference.

## **Graduated Approach**

One of the key aspects of the SEND Code of Practice is the four-stage process of ‘assess, plan, do, review’; this is known as a ‘graduated approach’ to planning for and meeting the needs of children with SEND. This process may be begun as soon as concerns are identified.



### ***Assess***

A variety of tools can be used to assess children and the progress they are making and to identify gaps.

- Talking with parent and carers, as they often hold valuable information and observations about their own child
- Outside agency reports
- Integrated health review (if the child is over 2 years old)
- Observations of the child
- In Leicestershire, we have the [Early Learning Guidelines](#), which breaks down the development matters statements into small age bands to help you track where a child is and celebrate small step progress.

### ***Plan***

Following the assessment process, you will now need to plan what it is you are going to do to address any of the gaps identified. A targeted plan is a good place to start with this. Remember, outcomes that you want the child to be able to do and the steps to achieve these outcomes are vital at this point. Examples of targeted plans can be found here:

<https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/early-years/early-years-send-inclusion/practitioners/assess-plan-do-review>

### ***Do***

Once a plan has been written and shared with parents, it is important to create a provision and any interventions that support the outcomes to be met. It is also important at this stage to share any plans and outcomes with all the adults working with the child.

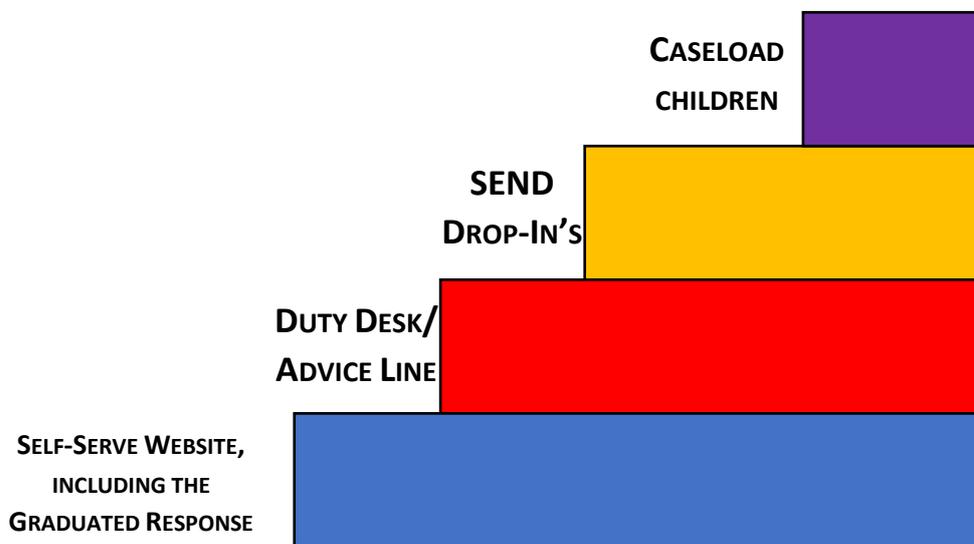
### ***Review***

The graduated approach is a cycle, and as part of this cycle, it should be reviewed to ensure progress is being made. The targeted plan is very much a working document that should be amended and edited as needed, following the lead from the child. This is also the case for any additional interventions that is ran for the child. Regular review meetings should be held with yourselves, parents/carers and any other professionals working with the child (or an opportunity for them to

contribute via their own reports). When a child has a confirmed school place, it is also best practice to invite the child’s new school to these reviews.

This graduated approach will need to be evidenced when applying for additional support, additional funding or for statutory assessment (Education, Health and Care Plans – needs assessment (see additional guides)).

In Leicestershire, we have developed a Graduated Approach to the support we offer.



***Self-Serve Website (including Graduated Response Document)***

The Graduated Response Booklet is a document for you to refer to within settings. It is broken down into the areas of need, with each area of need describing quality first teaching as well as graduated support and strategies for the children with whom you have concerns around.

We are also developing the resources and support we are offering on the webpages, that we can direct providers to.

A copy of the graduated response booklet and resources can be found here:

<https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/early-years/early-years-send-inclusion>

***Duty Desk/Advice Line***

The duty desk is now available daily 9am-12pm (0116 305 7136). The phone will be answered by the admin team, or an Area SENCO. They can support with unnamed SEND Advice.

### **SEND Drop In's**

These sessions give providers the chance to discuss children who may be presenting with some difficulties within the setting. It is on an unnamed basis but with a range of professionals involved. Please see our Eventbrite pages for more information, including dates of upcoming drop-in's.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/early-years-inclusion-and-childcare-service-17452958459>

### **Panel**

For the majority of children that come to panel, we would be expecting to see evidence of the above to ensure the children that get agreed to be taken on at panel, are children needing specialist advice/teachers. The exception for not needing this evidence being very young children, children not in a setting, or children with a clear high level of specialist need.

### **Transition**

Children with SEND may find transitions difficult. You have an important role to play in ensuring that: parents feel happy and confident; the child feels happy and supported and the new setting or school have all the information you have gathered and knowledge you have learnt. This will ensure a successful transition. When a transition to another setting is due to occur, you should consider:



- Who should the information be shared with? Have parents given appropriate permission?
- How it might be different if the child attends multiple settings – who will take the lead?
- Arranging/attending all transitional meetings
- Practicalities to inclusion – did you need specific training that the new setting or school may be required to undertake? Are there any specific resources or equipment that need to be shared or transferred?
- What can we do in terms of an 'enhanced transition' for the child? E.g. additional visits, transition books

### **Funding**

Inclusion Funding – Inclusion Funding may be available for you to apply for, when children with very complex needs would benefit from additional staff support.

Most children with special educational or additional needs are successfully included, without the need to increase the number of staff. However, in circumstances where children with the most complex needs would benefit from additional staffing, inclusion funding may be available.

Panel meet to discuss funding applications throughout the year.



More information can be found here: <https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/early-years/early-years-send-inclusion/apply-for-inclusion-funding-for-children-with-high-needs>

Disability Access Fund (DAF) – this is a one-off payment to settings supporting a three or four year old who is taking up their free entitlement and who is receiving Disability Living Allowance

More information can be found here: <https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs-and-disability/funding/disability-access-fund-daf>

### **Support for Parents and Carers**

Local Offer – Local Authorities have a duty to publish a ‘Local Offer’ on their website. The Local Offer details services, facilities, organisations and activities open to children and young people with SEND in the local area. The link to the Local Offer is here: <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs-and-disability/where-to-start-with-send/what-is-the-local-offer>

Parent Carer Forums – There is a national network of parent carer forums across England. These are independent, parent-led forums working with Local Authorities and CCGs. More information can be found here: <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/popular-now/directories/information-and-support-directory/leicestershire-parent-carer-forum>

SEND Information, Advice and Support Service – This national service (SENDIASS), provides support and advice to families involved with SEND services. More information can be found here: <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/popular-now/directories/information-and-support-directory/send-information-advice-and-support-service-sendiass>

Other useful information for Early Years providers:

- EHCP <https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs-and-disability/support-for-schools/assessment-of-sen-sena> (see additional guide)
- Top Up Funding for school <https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs-and-disability/support-for-schools/assessment-of-sen-sena> (see additional guide)
- Information on the Early Years SEND Inclusion Team <https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/early-years/early-years-send-inclusion>
- DLA <https://www.gov.uk/disability-living-allowance-children>
- Nafen <https://nasen.org.uk/>

