

09 Early Years Practice Procedures

09.13 Identification, assessment and support for children with SEND

Our Approach

We follow the SEND Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2015), which requires early years settings to ensure equality and inclusion for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Providers must remove barriers to learning and work with parents to help children achieve their potential.

Broad Areas of Need

Children's SEND typically falls into four categories:

1. Communication and interaction
2. Cognition and learning
3. Social, emotional, and mental health
4. Sensory and/or physical needs

Graduated Approach

Step 1: Initial Identification and Support

- Ongoing formative assessment is part of observing, planning, and reviewing children's progress.
- Children showing difficulties in development are offered differentiated strategies.
- A SEN Support: Initial Record of Concern form may be completed and attached to the child's Family account; the SENDCO team is informed.
- If difficulties persist, the key person raises a concern with the SENCo/setting manager and parents.
- Staff follow the 'emerging needs' flowchart if they have any concerns.

Step 2: Observation and Assessment

- Gather information from multiple sources:
 - Progress checks at age two

- Learning story assessments
- Check-in assessments
- Parent questionnaires
- Observations from parents and educators
- Advice from external specialists (if involved)
- SEN determination is made jointly by the key person and SENCo/manager.
- Parents are fully engaged and provide input on interventions.

Planning Intervention

- Parents and staff collaborate to plan interventions.
- Differentiated support may continue or an Individual Learning and Development Plan (ILDP) may be created immediately for more complex needs.
- ILDPs are stored in the child's Family file, commented on weekly, and reviewed each half-term.
- The child is involved where possible, in line with their understanding.

ILDP Details:

- Required support, frequency, and responsible staff
- Resources to be used
- Short- and long-term targets
- Accessible summary for child and family
- Integrated with healthcare plans if medical needs exist

ILDP, highlights areas in which a child is progressing well; areas in which some additional support might be needed and any areas where there is a concern that a child may have a developmental delay (which may indicate a special educational need or disability). It describes the activities and strategies the provider intends to adopt to address any issues or concerns.

Involving the Child

- Children's views are considered appropriately.
- Supports self-confidence, trust, and ownership of learning.
- Key person and SENCo work to ensure communication is effective for the child's participation.

Record Keeping

Records of SEND concerns include:

- Initial cause for concern and sources
- Parent discussions and views
- Procedures followed per the Code of Practice
- Evidence of progress and barriers
- Advice from external professionals
- Observations, risk assessments, access audits, healthcare plans, ILDPs, meeting notes, and referrals

Funding Support

- If needs cannot be met within core funding, the setting may apply for top-up/enhanced funding via the local authority.
- Check if families receive Disability Living Allowance for additional funding via the local Disability Access Fund.

Statutory EHC Assessment and Plan

- Conducted if a child is not making expected progress and needs cannot be met with existing resources.
- Local authorities must involve parents and consider setting input.
- Assessment considers:
 - Child's progress and interventions
 - External agency advice
 - Parental and child views
- Parents can appeal if an assessment is declined.
- EHC plans detail short-term outcomes, long-term goals, and may name the early years setting (funded if agreed).
- Reviews for children under five occur every 3–6 months, complementing annual statutory reviews.

External Support

- Recommendations from qualified professionals (e.g., speech & language therapists, educational psychologists) guide SEND support and interventions.

Further Guidance

- [SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years](#) (DfE and DoH 2015)
- [Ready, Steady, SENCO](#) (Alliance Publication)