**08 Early years practice procedures**

**08.7 Identification, assessment and support for children with SEND**

We have regard for the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) (DfE and DoH 2015) which states that local authoritiesmust ensure that all early years providers that they fund in the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sectors are aware of the requirement on them to meet the needs of children with SEN and disabilities. When securing funded early education for two, three- and four-year-olds local authorities should promote equality and inclusion for children with disabilities or SEN; this includes removing barriers that prevent access to early education and working with parents to give each child support to fulfil their potential.

The term SEN support defines arrangements for identifying and supporting children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. We are required to offer appropriate support and intervention and to promote equality of opportunity for children that we care for. Children’s SEND generally falls within the following four broad areas of need and support:

* communication and interaction
* cognition and learning
* social, emotional and mental health
* sensory and/or physical needs

Graduated approach

Initial identification and support (identifying special educational needs)

* Ongoing formative assessment forms part of a continuous process for observing, assessing, planning and reviewing children’s progress.
* Children identified as having difficulty with one or more area of development should be given support by applying some simple strategies and resources (universal level).
* For most children application of some simple differentiation approaches will be enough to build confidence and help the child develop.
* If despite applying differentiated strategies a child continues to struggle and is showing significantly more difficulty with learning than their peers or has a disability which requires specific adjustments, then the key person should raise a concern with the setting’s SENCo/setting manager.

Observation and assessment of children’s SEN

Where a child appears to be behind expected levels, or their progress gives cause for concern, educators should consider all the information about the child’s learning and development from within and beyond the setting.

* Information can be collated from formal checks such as the progress check at age two, observations from parents and observation and assessment by the setting of the child’s progress.
* When specialist advice has been sought externally, this is used to help determine whether or not a child has a special educational need (SEN).
* The child’s key person and SENCo/Manager use this information to decide if the child has a special educational need.
* If the decision is that the child does have a SEN and the parents are not already aware of a concern, then the information is shared with them. Once parents have been informed, they should be fully engaged in the process, contributing their insights to all future actions for their child.

**Planning intervention**

* Everyone involved with the child should be given an opportunity to share their views. Parents should be encouraged to share their thoughts on the child’s strengths and concerns and be involved in the decision as to what will happen next.
* A first intervention option may be to carry on with applying differentiated support and to review the child’s progress at an agreed date. If the child’s needs are more complex, then the decision maybe to go straight ahead and prepare a targeted plan (target level).
* If relevant, then the child should be appropriately included in development of the action plan but only at a level which reflects their stage of comprehension.

**Involving the child**

* The SEND Code of Practice supports the rights of children to be involved in decisions about their education.
* Inclusion of children with SEND helps build self-confidence and trust in others.
* Ascertaining children’s views may not be easy, a range of strategies will be needed.
* Accurate assessment helps identify children’s strengths and possible barriers to learning.
* The key person and setting manager/SENCo work in partnership with parents and other agencies to involve the child wherever appropriate.
* Children are involved at appropriate stages of the assessment and to their level of ability.
* Establishing effective communication is essential for the child’s involvement.

**SEN action plan**

* The Target plan, will show what support is required to help achieve outcomes for the child and detail the frequency of these interventions and who will apply them and with what resources.
* A copy of the plan is stored in the child’s fileso thatany other member of staff or an inspector looking at the file will see how the child is progressing and what interventions have been or are being applied.
* If a child requires specific medical interventions during their time in the setting, 04.2a Health care plan form should also be completed and integrated into the general plans to ensure the child’s medical needs are known and safely met.
* The target plan should provide an accessible summary of the child’s needs, which can be used if further assessment is required including a statutory Education Health and Care (EHC) Assessment, and development of an EHC plan.

**Drawing up a SEN action plan**

* If external agencies are already involved at this stage, then they should also be invited to help decide on what appropriate interventions are needed to help meet outcomes for the child. The SENCo/setting manager should take the lead in coordinating further actions including preparation of the target plan and setting short-term targets.
* Where there are significant emerging concerns (or an identified special educational need or disability) Personalised Plans are formulated that relate to a clear set of expected outcomes and stretching targets.
* Planned intervention should be based on the best possible evidence and have the required impact on progress with longer-term goals covering all aspects of learning and development and shorter-term targets meeting goals.

**Record keeping**

If a child has or is suspected of having a SEN, a *Graduated Approach* record should be kept of:

* the initial cause for concern and the source of this information, (the progress check at age two and/or outcomes of previous interventions).
* the initial discussion with parents raising the possibility of the child’s SEN
* the views of the parents and other relevant persons including, wherever possible, the child’s views;
* the procedures followed with regard to the Code of Practice to meet the child’s SEND e.g. SEN action plan, referrals to external agencies and for statutory assessment
* evidence of the child’s progress and any identified barriers to learning
* advice from other relevant professionals; and all subsequent meetings with parents and other persons and any subsequent referrals

**Seeking additional funding SENIF**

If the child’s needs cannot be met from within the setting’s core funding, then it will be at this point that the evidence collated will be used to apply for SENIF funding from the local authority’s inclusion fund. If a new or existing child is disabled, then the setting should check if the family is in receipt or have applied for Disability Living Allowance. If so, the setting will be able to apply to their local authority for the local Disability Access Fund.

#### Statutory education, health and care (EHC) assessment and plan

**Statutory assessment**

* If a child has not made progress, then the next steps may be for the child to undergo an Education, Health and Care Assessment.
* If a child is under compulsory school age, the local authority will conduct an EHC needs assessment if they consider that the child’s needs cannot be met within the resources normally available to the early years setting.
* When a child’s needs appear to be sufficiently complex, or the evidence suggest specialist intervention then the local authority is likely to conclude that an EHC plan is necessary
* If an early years setting is named, the local authority must fund this provision. They cannot force a setting to take a child and can only name the provision in the EHC if the setting agrees.

**External intervention and support**

Where external agency intervention has been identified to help support a child with SEND then this intervention should be recommended in writing by a suitably reliable source such as a speech and language therapist, paediatrician or educational psychologist.

**Further guidance**

[SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25) (DfE and DoH 2015)