



Coordinating SEND provision in schools

Section 2b - SEND & Inclusion Toolkit

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Supporting SEND in mainstream schools (Reception to Year 11)

Our ambition in Durham is that every child or young person with special educational needs reaches their full potential in school and makes a successful transition to adulthood. The vast majority of children with SEN, including those with EHC plans, can and should thrive in mainstream schools.

Inclusive education includes everyone learning together in mainstream settings. Some of the key things that we would notice if children and young people were successfully included in their educational community are:

- Being present in their education setting
- Participating fully in their educational community
- Achieving and making progress at a pace that is right for them
- Feeling that they belong in their community
- Working towards being as independent as possible.

We expect all our mainstream schools to be 'inclusive' and meet the needs of all of their children and young people. Successful examples of good inclusive practice include:

- High expectations for all
- Quality first teaching approaches
- Appropriate differentiation
- Additional support
- Positive learning environment for everyone
- Respect for diversity
- Making effective use of resources.

Enhanced mainstream/learning provision (EMP/ELP)

Some mainstream schools have Enhanced Mainstream/Learning Provisions (EMP/ELP) to meet the needs of some children and young people.

For a list of EMP/ELPs please refer to the Local Offer

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/19059/Finding-a-school-to-suit-your-child-s-needs> and individual school websites for further details of their individual offers.

School referrals to EMPs/ELPs should be made to the SEN Casework team

sencasework@durham.gov.uk and will be considered by the SEND Casework Panel. The

request form can be found on the Local Offer. N.B. Parents/carers cannot make a referral themselves.

Special schools in Durham

The Local Authority may arrange a placement at a special school through the Education, Health and Care assessment or annual review process.

The core offer in special schools is designed to meet highly complex special educational needs. Please refer to the Local Offer <https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/19059/Finding-a-school-to-suit-your-child-s-needs> and individual special school websites for their individual offers.

SEN information report and SEN Policy

All schools, including special schools are legally required to publish their SEN Information Report. This **must be published on the school website and updated annually**; with changes which occur during the year updated as soon as possible.

It **must** include information about:

- the kinds of SEN that are provided for.
- how the school identifies children and young people with SEN and how they assess their needs, including the name and contact details of the SENCO.
- the school's arrangements for consulting parents/carers of children with SEN and children/young people and involving them in their child's education.
- the school's arrangements for assessing and reviewing children and young people's progress towards outcomes.
- the school's arrangements for supporting children and young people as they move between phases of education and in their preparation for adulthood.
- the school's approach to teaching children and young people with SEN.
- how the school adapts the curriculum and the learning environment of children and young people with SEN.
- the expertise and training of staff to support children and young people with SEN, including how specialist expertise is secured.
- how the school handles complaints from parents/carers of children or young people with SEN about the provision made at the school.
- how the school evaluates the effectiveness of the provision made for children and young people with SEN.
- how children and young people with SEN are included so that they are able to engage in all school activities.
- the support for improving emotional and social development.

- how the school involves other bodies and agencies, in meeting children and young people's SEN and supporting their families.
- the school's arrangements for supporting children and young people who are looked after by the Local Authority and have SEN.
- OFSTED will always analyse the SEN Information Report prior to an inspection. This may inform lines of enquiry in the inspection.

SEN policy

All school SEN provision should be detailed in the SEN Information Report (SIR) but most schools also choose to publish a SEN policy as good practice. The Local Authority would also encourage this. The SEN policy should incorporate and expand on aspects mentioned in the SIR but it does not need to duplicate it. The SEN policy should link with other school policies, such as Teaching & Learning, Behaviour, Accessibility Plan, Equality objectives etc.

Maintenance of SEN records

Schools should follow GDPR guidelines and work with the school's data controller. However, the information below sets out some general guidance for good practice.

Schools need to take relevant steps to meet the individual needs of all pupils with special educational needs. The SENCO should have responsibility for ensuring that these records (paper copy and electronic) are properly kept and available as needed. The SEND Code of Practice 0-25 years states:

"The provision made for pupils with SEN should be recorded accurately and kept up to date..."

Schools must provide full pupil records to a receiving school or educational setting even if the new setting does not lodge a request. Such records should include all the information held by the SENCO/school including, for example, pupil profile, all support plans and reports from professionals.

Schools should ensure:

- SEND files (paper records) are kept securely at all times (including details of exam concessions/access arrangements).
- only authorised IT systems and secure email accounts are used.
- electronic SEND files are password protected.
- line manager approval is sought before taking paper records off site. This should only happen when it is absolutely essential to do so, and there is no alternative method for accessing or recording the information required (e.g. scanning or accessing online via encrypted portable IT equipment).

- where paper records have to be taken off site, only the minimum amount of personal or other confidential data necessary for the job in hand should be removed. Where possible, data should be anonymised.
- memory pens containing confidential data are encrypted. As with paper records, these should be taken off-site only in essential circumstances with the minimum information on the pen.
- they check email addresses, content and attachments before sending any documents to secure email addresses.
- when passing over paper copies of pupil files they should complete an acknowledgement form that is signed and dated by both parties.

In addition, settings should be aware of:

- consent to share (from parent/carer or young person of 16 years of age), including sharing '[My Story](#)'.
- joint parental responsibility (and therefore sharing information with everyone that is legally entitled).
- for children and young people who have a special educational need and are also Looked After, **a protected address should not be shared on any document.**

SEN census

The census gathers data on SEN status and primary need in January of each year. There are further censuses in May and October where the numbers of SEN are collected. Most schools in County Durham do this through the SIMS system. The January census data informs information systems and reports such as Analyse School Performance (ASP) and Fischer Family Trust. SENCOs should work alongside administrative support in their school to ensure all census information is correct.

SEN register

This can be kept in any format and should contain information regarding a child or young person's SEN status and their primary need. However, for a school's own records, secondary and/or additional needs will demonstrate a good understanding of all the child's/young person's needs and will be valuable for planning and evaluating provision. Many schools adapt the SIMS SEN register for this purpose.

N.B. children/young people who have difficulties across any of the four areas of need should be noted on the SEN register - not only those with cognition and learning needs.

This is particularly important for pupils who may display challenging or withdrawn behaviour (such as anxiety), as these behaviours may be linked to unmet needs. SENCOs should meet regularly with pastoral staff in school to ensure needs are not missed and relevant assessments are carried out.

Parents and carers **must** be formally notified when their child is accessing SEN provision and added on to the SEN register and also if they have been removed from the SEN register.

SEN status (SIMS codes)

- E - Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP)
- K - SEN Support: All children who are receiving 'additional to or different from' support but do not have an EHC Plan
- N - No SEN*.

The SENCO should be the only person in school who has the authority to change SEN statuses and SEN types throughout the year and many do this at the point of review, rather than waiting for census dates, so that records always remain accurate.

*N.B. N (No SEN) status should only be used for the first census after a child or young person is taken off the register. In many cases, the SENCO works with a specific school administrator to update the register, but its accuracy remains the responsibility of the SENCO. Before any census data is returned, SENCOs should check the information has been inputted correctly.

Other registers

In addition to a SEN register, it is strongly advisable that schools and other educational providers have internal registers to record needs such as:

- Disability and/or medical needs.
- English as an Additional Language.
- Cause for concern or monitoring (these can be used for a wide range of tracking for example: literacy or behaviour interventions).

Working with colleagues

It is very important that the SENCO/SEND department and pastoral colleagues meet regularly as there may be an overlap with SEN and other needs (see 'Other individual needs' below). This will ensure that:

- all pupils benefit from early identification.
- holistic planning and provision is made to meet the individual needs of all the children and young people in their care.
- all school records are up to date and accurate.

Other individual needs

The needs described below are not, in themselves, indicators of a child or young person having a SEN. However, when dealing with these issues, consideration should be given to whether a child or young person may have any underlying and unmet needs, such as a SEN.

a) Attendance

Attendance may be affected by a variety of reasons and should be addressed through school and LA policies. Persistent attendance issues may have an impact on educational progress, and the setting may need to put some relevant intervention in place, but this does not necessarily mean a child or young person has a SEN.

b) Specific medical conditions

Where children have specific and potentially serious medical conditions (e.g. allergies, diabetes, epilepsy) it is important that staff know what should be done to ensure their general wellbeing, and how to deal with emergencies and plan in advance for the following academic year. Children should be placed on the school's register of those pupils requiring an Individual Healthcare Plan (IHP) and this should be shared with all staff.

c) Minor/short term difficulties

A block of treatment – such as physiotherapy or speech and language therapy – for example following an accident does not constitute a special educational need when the difficulty is known to be relatively short term and has no impact on progress or other areas of need.

d) Children Looked After

Children who are known to be looked after will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), designed to ensure that their wider educational needs are considered. N.B. If a child who is looked after also has a SEN support plan or Education, Health and Care Plan then these should be reviewed together, wherever possible.

e) Family-based issues

Children may be the subject of an agency referral (for example an Early Help assessment or Team Around the Family) for support in relation to a family-based issue. If a child or young person also has a SEN, then all professionals should be aware of this and the child or young person's SEN Support or EHC Plan should be shared. The SENCO should be made aware of the dates of meetings and any actions. The SENCO may be asked to provide information for these meetings and may wish to attend if a child/young person has very complex needs.

f) English as an Additional Language (EAL)

Children whose first language is not English may require additional support to access the curriculum. Where this support is needed solely for their lack of English it does not constitute a special educational need. However, identifying and assessing SEND for pupils whose first language is not English requires particular care. Schools should look at all areas of difficulties to establish whether a lack of progress is due to limitations in their command of the English language or if it arises from a SEN or disability. Schools should contact the County's EAL team in the first instance for further advice.

g) Below average attainment

Slow progress and underachievement do not, in themselves, constitute a special educational need. Such children should have their needs met by quality first teaching, differentiation of the curriculum and access to support in the classroom. Where such provision is sufficient to enable progress, children should not be registered as having a special educational need. However, schools must monitor this progress robustly to ensure children/young people are assessed correctly and any unmet need is identified in a timely manner.

h) Behaviour that challenges (and exclusions)

There are a number of children and young people who present with behaviour that challenges. Whilst behavioural difficulties in themselves do not constitute a special educational need, careful consideration should be given to considering the factors that might be underpinning the behaviour. For example, staff need to consider whether or not there is:

- an underlying learning difficulty;
- a social, emotional or mental health need;
- a developmental difficulty or;
- a communication difficulty.

Schools should have a robust monitoring system in place to track pupils' behaviour, via behaviour support plans. It may be appropriate to consider these in terms of an 'assess, plan, do, review' cycle as this would be evidence of a graduated approach. SENCOs and pastoral staff should meet regularly and, where needed, link with the SEND & Inclusion Team - to provide a holistic view of and approach to children and young people with behaviour that challenges. This way, further assessment can be carried out in a timely manner and the outcome could be that a child or young person is then identified with a special educational need.

Across the County there are a number of Inclusion Panels, which focus their efforts on early intervention and support for young people experiencing behavioural difficulties, who may be at risk of exclusion. As part of these panels there is an explicit discussion about possible underlying SEND and planning to meet needs as appropriate. However, before

applying to a panel, schools should have **used their best endeavours to assess the pupil for any underlying difficulty and allocated appropriate intervention or support where needed**. This shows a graduated approach to meeting an individual pupil's needs.

Broad areas of special educational need

Even the most detailed guidance cannot fully reflect the complexity and subtlety of individual pupils' needs, and the implications of these for education. A detailed assessment of need should ensure that the full range of a child/young person's needs are identified so that the support provided is based on the understanding of the pupil's strengths and needs and this evidence will ensure interventions are targeted at their area of difficulty. Assessment could be through in-school investigations, and/or specialist advice.

Children and young people may have other difficulties such as housing, family or other domestic circumstances which should be addressed through a multi-agency approach using the Early Help assessment. In County Durham, this is provided by the ONE Point Service.

The definition of SEN set out in the SEND Code of Practice 0-25 years is deliberately broad due to the wide spectrum of difficulties that can lead to a child or young person experiencing problems in learning. The SEND Code of Practice 0-25 years narrows this spectrum into four areas of SEN, with the intention of helping schools and others to plan their provision and to focus on relevant and high-quality interventions.

Children and young people may experience difficulty in more than one area:

- Cognition & Learning
- Communication & Interaction
- Social, Emotional & Mental Health
- Physical & Sensory.

Cognition & Learning

Support for learning difficulties may be required when children/young people learn at a slower rate, or in a different way to the majority of their peers, even with appropriate differentiation. Learning difficulties cover a wide range of needs, including:

- Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)
- Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), where children are likely to need support in all areas of the curriculum and associated difficulties with mobility and communication
- Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD), where children are likely to have severe and complex learning difficulties as well as a physical disability or sensory impairment

- Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD), affect one or more specific aspects of learning.
- This encompasses a range of conditions such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia.

When promoting the learning and development of children/young people with cognition and learning needs it is important to consider both the child's/young person's difficulties and strengths as well as the modifications and adaptations in the learning environment and teaching style.

Schools need to plan on the basis of a detailed picture of what the barriers are for an individual pupil in relation to a particular aspect of learning, rather than on the basis of the category the pupil is placed in for the census.

For example, the pupil may:

- need feelings such as anxiety or panic to be understood,
- need a high level of encouragement (more than most pupils),
- prefer help to be given discreetly,
- prefer support from peers or others who have struggled with the same learning process, rather than from specialists, adults or older learners,
- prefer learning to be broken down into small steps, so as to tackle one manageable piece at a time,
- need help to see the 'big picture',
- need lots of examples or demonstrations,
- need opportunities to practise using a 'scaffolding' approach – providing support, such as doing part of the task alongside the learner and then slowly withdrawing the support as they become more competent,
- need clear instructions and models, repeated as often as necessary to support retention.

Communication & Interaction

Children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) may have difficulty in communicating with others. This may be because they have difficulty saying what they want to, understanding what is being said to them or they do not understand or use social rules of communication. The profile for every child/young person with SLCN is different and their needs may change over time. They may have difficulty with one, some or all of the different aspects of language, communication and imagination.

There are sometimes overlaps between speech, language and communication needs and other conditions such as Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC) (including Asperger's Syndrome); Cognition & Learning difficulties, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

(ADHD); social needs or emotional difficulties; mental health issues; Hearing Impairment and Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD).

Although children and young people can be identified as having SLCN as a primary need, we know that children/young people in the majority of the other areas of need will also have associated SLCN. Each child or young person with SLCN is different, so it is better to look at the nature and impact of their difficulties rather than the condition they may have.

Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH)

SEMH is an overarching term for children/young people who demonstrate difficulties with emotional regulation, social interaction or who are experiencing mental health problems. If a child/young person is presenting with these difficulties, it is also important to consider whether these are linked to needs in other areas of their development, such as communication and interaction.

Children and young people who have difficulties with their emotional and social development may have immature social skills and find it difficult to make and sustain healthy relationships. These difficulties may be displayed through the child or young person becoming withdrawn or isolated, as well as through challenging, disruptive or disturbing behaviour. These could manifest as difficulties such as low mood which might be linked to anxiety or depression, problems of conduct (oppositional problems and more severe conduct problems including aggression), self-harming, substance misuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained. Some children and young people may have other recognised disorders such as ADD, ADHD or Attachment Disorder, Autism or Pervasive Developmental Disorder, an anxiety disorder, phobias, a disruptive disorder or, rarely, schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

Pupils with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) may display impulsive, hyperactive, or inattentive behaviour. The child/young person can struggle in school and home settings, which is often challenging to adults.

Inappropriate, disturbing and/or challenging behaviours can be interpreted as a symptom or communication of an underlying need or difficulty. It is crucial to identify, understand and then address/support the underlying factors that impact on children and young people, such as SLCN, attachment difficulties, unhelpful thought processes or learning needs in order to address these behaviours.

The majority of inappropriate, disturbing and/or challenging behaviours can be avoided or at least significantly reduced and managed through proactively promoting and supporting positive social, emotional and mental health. The potential implications of unmet SEMH needs for education settings, individuals and their families can be extreme.

Children/young people with SEMH will often feel anxious, scared and misunderstood.

Typical characteristics of children/young people with SEMH can include:

- disruptive, antisocial and uncooperative behaviour
- temper tantrums
- frustration, anger and verbal and physical threats/aggression
- appearing to be withdrawn and depressed
- anxiety based school refusal and truancy
- displaying anxiety or self-harming
- avoidance
- substance misuse.

Sensory and/or Physical Needs

Some children and young people require special educational provision because they have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of the educational facilities generally provided. These difficulties can be age related and may fluctuate over time. This includes Visual Impairment (VI), Hearing Impairment (HI) or a Multi-Sensory Impairment (MSI). Children and young people with a MSI have a combination of vision and hearing difficulties and will require specialist support and/or equipment to access their learning, or habilitation support. Some children and young people with a physical disability (PD) require additional ongoing support and equipment to access all the opportunities available to their peers.

Pupils with Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD) can be severely affected by an impairment or immaturity of the organisation of movement, often appearing clumsy. Gross and fine motor skills are hard to learn and difficult to retain and generalise. Pupils may have poor balance and coordination and may be hesitant in many actions (running, skipping, hopping, holding a pencil, doing jigsaws, etc). Their articulation may also be immature, their language late to develop, and they may also have poor awareness of body position. Some pupils may also have memory difficulties and as stated above, there are sometimes overlaps between areas of need so a holistic approach to the individual child or young person's needs is required.

*There are leaflets for parents on the [Local Offer](#) explaining the different types of special educational need and how schools can support children and young people. Schools may also find them useful to use alongside the SEN planning tools.

SEN Planning tools

To help settings plan for the different special educational needs, we have devised 'SEN planning tools', which can be found on the ['SEND toolkit and documents'](#) webpage.

These are:

- Speech, Language and Communication needs
- Physical difficulties
- Hearing Impairment
- Visual Impairment
- Autism
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties
- Learning difficulties
- Anxiety/anxious/school refusal.

These tools describe the type of support that all educational settings should be making for children and young people in different areas of need. SENCOs should ensure all staff are using these as part of planning, outcome setting and assessment, so all pupils' needs can be met, and all pupils are supported to make sustained progress.

Teachers' Standards

These standards define the minimum level of practice expected of trainees and teachers from the point of being awarded qualified teacher status (QTS). The Teachers' Standards are used to assess all trainees working towards QTS, and all those completing their statutory induction period. They are also used to assess the performance of all teachers with QTS who are subject to The Education (School Teachers' Appraisal) (England) Regulations 2012 and may additionally be used to assess the performance of teachers who are subject to these regulations and who hold qualified teacher learning and skills (QTLS) status.

Quality First Teaching (QFT)

High quality teaching that is differentiated and personalised will meet the individual needs of the majority of children and young people". (CoP 2015)

High quality, inclusive teaching ensures that planning and implementation meets the needs of all pupils, and builds in high expectations for all pupils, including those with SEND. It is about the different pedagogical approaches that teachers use to engage and motivate learners which ensure good pupil progress.

The characteristics of quality first teaching are:

- Clearly designed lesson plans
- Plenty of opportunities to involve and engage with pupils
- Appropriate use of modelling, explaining and questioning for pupils to engage with higher levels of critical thinking skills.
- Providing pupils with the chance to talk both individually and in groups.
- An expectation that pupils will accept responsibility for their own learning and work independently.
- Regularly using encouragement and (authentic) praise to engage and motivate pupils.

Pupil profiles

As part of QFT, information about a child/young person's needs should be shared with relevant staff (in line with a school's confidentiality policy). Schools have different ways of doing this; they may be known as a one-page profile, learning passport or pen portrait. The profile does not have to be a lengthy document, but should include:

- strengths and interests
- individual needs and difficulties
- strategies to meet needs
- other relevant background information.

Profiles are even more powerful if the profiles are written in the first person and demonstrate the pupil's voice.

My Story

This is a document we use in Durham that outlines a child or young person's life from their (and their parents'/carers') point of view. This provides more detail than a pupil profile.

It can describe school placements, explain complex relationships, and difficult times for the child or young person. It can include practical information about family circumstances and what the child or young person likes and dislikes and what is important to them.

This document is 'owned' by the parent, child or young person and should aim to have all the details in so an individual story does not have to be repeated to many professionals.

There are two versions available - one for younger pupils and one for older pupils designed by young people in Durham.

Consent to share **must** be agreed by parents carers or child/young person.

Although this is a document that may be completed before applying for statutory assessment, it can be completed at any point prior to this. 'My Story' should be completed with a relevant professional who is trusted by the family which may be the school or other professional, such as [SENDIASS](#).

Early identification of needs

Every school should have a clear approach to identifying and responding to SEND. Identifying need at the earliest point and then making effective provision improves long term outcomes for the child or young person.

A pupil has SEND where their learning difficulty (across *any* of the four areas of need) or disability calls for special educational provision, this is:

"educational or training provision that is 'additional to' or 'different from' that made generally for others of the same age."

(SEND Code of Practice 0-25 years)

This means provision that goes beyond the differentiated approaches and learning arrangements normally provided as part of quality first teaching. It may take the form of additional support from within the setting or require the involvement of specialist staff or support services.

Making quality first teaching available to the whole class is likely to mean that fewer pupils will require such support.

It is very important that there is clear criteria of what is available through QFT and what is 'additional to' and 'different from' (SEN) provision. The Planning Tools can help with this as every broad area of need has a section on QFT. Other professionals, such as the DCC SEND Support Services and NHS Teams can also help schools distinguish between QFT and 'additional to'/'different from' provision.

Slow progress and low attainment do not necessarily mean that a child/young person has a special educational need and should not automatically lead to a pupil being recorded as having SEN, but schools should:

- make sure that the identification of difficulties (which may lead to a SEN) is part of their overall approach to monitoring the progress and development of all pupils (including those with behaviour difficulties).
- assess each pupil's current skills and attainment on entry.
- make regular assessments of progress for all pupils. Where pupils are falling behind or making inadequate progress given their age and starting point, they should be given extra support. This is a whole school responsibility involving the class teacher or subject teachers, supported by the senior leadership team, as the Teachers' Standards make it clear that all teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class, including where pupils access support from teaching assistants or specialist staff.
- At this early stage, teachers may suspect that a pupil has SEN. While informally gathering evidence (including the views of the pupil and their parents) schools should not delay in putting further support and intervention in place to meet the specific needs of the child/young person. The pupil's response to such support can help identify their particular needs.

This information gathering should include an early discussion with the pupil and their parents/carers. These early discussions with parents should be structured in such a way that they develop a good understanding of the pupil's areas of strength and difficulty, the parents' concerns, the agreed outcomes sought for the pupil and the next steps. A 'short note' (see below) of these early discussions should be added to the pupil's record, monitored on a regular basis in partnership with parents/carers and the child/young person where possible.

Schools should also tell parents and young people about the Local Authority's information, advice and support service (SENDIASS).

Short notes

County Durham have a template available on the Local Offer for schools to adapt.

The SENCO should monitor the use, quality and outcomes of short notes in their school, and ensure where escalation is needed, this is put in place as quickly as possible. At this stage, a child/young person should not be recorded on the SEN register. Many schools have a 'Short Note', 'Monitoring' or 'Cause for Concern' register that should be used for this purpose and this provides good evidence of a graduated approach for any external evaluations.

Where pupils continue to make inadequate progress, despite high-quality and differentiated teaching, targeted at their areas of need, the SENCO, working with school staff, specialists and parents/carers, should assess whether the child/young person has special educational needs that cannot be met through quality first teaching. The SENCO

should work closely with others, e.g. educational professionals, health professionals and the One Point Service (OPS).

All professionals, along with parents/carers should be in agreement about the level of SEN support that is required to meet the needs of the child/young person and a robust 'Assess, Plan, Do and Review' cycle should be put in place (see overleaf for further details). This is called the **graduated approach**. At this stage, with parental agreement, a pupil should be recorded on the SEN register as 'K' (SEN support). In County Durham, there is an expectation that every pupil at this stage will have an individualised SEN support plan.

Involving specialists

Where a child/young person continues to make little or no progress, despite appropriate and timely support that is matched to the child/young person's area of need, the school (teachers and SENCO) should:

- consider involving specialists (with parental agreement), including those from outside agencies. These could include specialist advisory teachers* (see below for further details) from within county, educational psychologists, CAMHs or speech & language therapists.
- together with the specialists, consider a range of effective teaching approaches, appropriate equipment, strategies and interventions in order to support the child's progress. They should agree the outcomes to be achieved and the provision needed through the support, including a date by which progress will be reviewed and ensure the support plan is updated to reflect this. This may include:
 - adapting or replacing the support or provision, depending on how effective it has been in achieving the expected outcomes.
 - planning and preparation for the transitions between phases of education and preparation for adult life.

Any recommendations from appropriate professionals should be discussed with the parent/carer or young person and be included in the support plan.

Specialist advisory teachers in Durham

We have a range of specialist advisory teachers who can help schools with understanding and meeting needs in focused areas of SEND including cognition & learning (including speech & language), social communication & autism, movement difficulties, sensory & physical difficulties and social, emotional and mental health. More information about the SEND & Inclusion Services offered by the County can be found in the document [**'SEND toolkit and documents'**](#) webpage.

Schools should never wait for an external assessment or diagnosis before putting any 'additional to' or 'different from' provision in place. It is the needs of the child/young person that are of paramount importance and the setting's provision to match these needs, not a 'label' that may be attached to a child.

SEN Support Plans

There is an expectation in County Durham that schools and educational providers can meet the needs of most children and young people with a special educational need through a robust SEN support plan.

There is a County Durham SEN support plan template on the Local Offer. We would encourage schools to adapt this rather than use their own. Schools may want to add a front cover and personal details to this template.

The template includes:

- Strengths and aspirations of child/young person
- Needs
- Provision to meet needs
- Shorter term outcomes
- Review section.

We would expect that for children or young people with more complex needs there will be more information about their needs/difficulties and associated outcomes noted on the plan in comparison to a child/young person with less complex special educational needs.

Regardless of the child's age, there should always be some discussion around the Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) outcomes, and this should become more prevalent from Year 9 onwards.

The PfA Outcomes Toolkit details the preparing for adulthood pathways:

- Good health
- Friendships, Relationships & Community
- Independent Living
- Employment

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/22416/PfA-Outcomes>

Reviewing SEN Support

The SEND Code of Practice 0-25 years states all SEN support should be reviewed **at least three times a year**. This should be facilitated by the person who has a good knowledge and understanding of the pupil and their needs, desired outcomes and attainment; in collaboration with parents, SENCOs, and, where appropriate, the pupil themselves. In primary schools, this is usually the class teacher. In secondary and post 16 provision, the SENCO or Key Worker may be the most appropriate professional to take on the role of reviewing the outcomes and plans.

Any external professionals who are **actively** involved (or have been within the review period) should be asked their opinion on how the child/young person is progressing

towards specific outcomes and whether the provision outlined in the plan is still relevant - feedback could be in an email, a written report, in person or via a telephone call.

Schools should review support plans within their existing systems therefore, some schools use parental consultation sessions and offer an extended timeslot. Others have dedicated timeslots to review plans.

Each school must have a robust plan in place to review SEN provision and all staff should have a good understanding of the system and their part in it. Schools should ensure that wherever possible these reviews can be linked to their existing structures and the reviews of other plans, such as a TAF or PEP*; however, schools must ensure there is enough time to review the provision and set new outcomes with parents and carers. Schools should **always** ensure parents, carers and the young people themselves are a central part of reviewing the individualised SEN provision and there is more guidance in Section 4.

As the 'Assess, Plan, Do, Review' cycles continue, SEN support and provision should be adapted or replaced depending on how effective it has been in achieving the agreed outcomes.

* For further guidance on how to combine a SEN Support review with a PEP, liaise with the school's Designated Teacher for CLA and if further advice is needed, the CLA Caseworker.

Reviewing SEN Support:

More detail on Transition can be found in Section 3 of the Toolkit. Below sets out a brief summary of expectations:

a) Between year groups

It is important that when a child or young person is **moving year groups**, the final review of the academic year takes into consideration any factors that may be important in the next year group, for example, the curriculum or physical environment. Wherever possible, new teachers should be part of the review or at the very least get a copy of the plan to start working on the new outcomes from the beginning of the academic term.

b) Between nursery and reception

It is important that when a child moves from a nursery provision to a reception class, the final review in the nursery takes into consideration any factors that may be important in the transition to school – for example full day provision, lunchtime support, the school curriculum, and the new physical environment. Reception staff should be part of the final nursery review and take part in a full transition process. Staff from reception should review the SEN Support as quickly as possible in the autumn term to ensure the plan is fit for purpose.

c) Reviewing SEN support when moving schools

It is particularly important that in transition years, reviews are completed in a collaborative way with the receiving school attending the review meetings wherever possible. By using this model, outcomes can reflect the provision and environment of the new school. If it is not possible to attend reviews, then a well-planned transition must take place to ensure new outcomes can be put in place as quickly as possible in the Autumn term. When a child/young person has transferred to a new school, the SEN provision should be reviewed as quickly as possible in the Autumn term and if necessary, a new support plan should be written to reflect the changes to the physical environment, the curriculum and provision. This should also be reflected in a support timetable.

d) Reviewing SEN Support in Years 9 and 11

From Year 9 onwards it is important that the underpinning principles of the Preparing for Adulthood agenda are explicitly embedded within the review process.

Relevant and purposeful discussion should take place during the selection of options for KS4 with extra opportunities to discuss aspirations with careers advisers where appropriate. This will enable choices to be firmly embedded in preparation for the transition review in Year 11.

School should include the family and young person in discussing their needs and aspirations and the Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) outcomes.

The PfA Outcomes Toolkit details the preparing for adulthood pathways:

- Good health
- Friendships, Relationships & Community
- Independent Living
- Employment

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/22416/PfA-Outcomes>

SEN support with 'top up' funding

In exceptional cases, some children and young people at the SEN support stage need more than £6000 of SEN provision and in Durham we have flexibility to meet these needs without schools/ parent/carers having to apply for an EHC assessment. In agreeing 'top up' funding, schools must be able to meet strict criteria. This can be found in the Mainstream School Provision Descriptors and Funding Bands and FAQ documents.

Applying for an EHC needs assessment

Where, despite the school having taken relevant and purposeful action through the graduated approach, the child or young person has not made expected progress, the school or parents could consider requesting an Education, Health and Care needs assessment.

This should be in **exceptional circumstances** and should never be the first response to meeting a child or young person's special educational need.

Please note, if a school requests an Education, Health, Care Plan assessment, then there is an expectation in County Durham, that there is evidence of **at least 3 cycles of 'Assess, Plan, Do, Review'** including having two SEN support plans that demonstrate SMART outcomes and are reviewed fully plus the current SEN Support Plan. All educational settings should be able to demonstrate how they have used the SEN notional budget to ensure relevant and purposeful actions have been put in place to meet the pupil's needs.

Anyone can bring a child or young person who has (or may have) SEN to the attention of the Local Authority. This includes educational settings, parents/carers, health and social care professionals, Early Years practitioners, youth offending teams, probation services, or those responsible for education in custody. This should be done with the knowledge and agreement of parents/carers or the child/young person where possible and it is very good practice that if the referrer is not an educational setting, they should contact that setting to discuss before applying for the assessment.

If the referrer is an educational setting, the request for an Education, Health and Care assessment form should be completed with a parental consent form. In addition, the head teacher must check the quality of the request and countersign the EHC request form.

If these documents are not signed, the LA will immediately return the request to the school.

The LA asks that they receive EHC requests from schools at least 16 weeks (a date usually in March of that year) from the last week of summer term, but the earlier the better. Each year's guidance date will be sent out in a timely manner to schools. This is not a statutory deadline it is person centred guidance so that if an assessment is agreed, then there is time to collate all evidence and have an outcome before the end of the Summer term. Adhering to the guideline helps schools, families and the LA plan more effectively for the new academic year.

Schools can still apply after this date, but each submission will be looked at by a manager and a conversation will be held with the school and parent to see if this can be held until September, due to the reasons above.

Please note, an EHC Needs Assessment may not always result in an EHC Plan.

Statutory timescales for an EHC needs assessment and development can be found in the SEND Code of Practice (2015), page 151.

Training is also available - details can be found on the Local Offer:

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/sendcoursedirectory>

EHC needs assessment

The Local Authority must adhere to strict guidelines when carrying out an assessment. In considering whether a statutory assessment is necessary, the Local Authority will pay particular attention to:

- The views, wishes and feelings of the child or his or her parent/carer, or the young person, using an appropriate method, such as Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS), Information Technology, My Story etc. These can be expressed through an advocate if required. The Local Authority must consult the child's parent or young person as soon as possible following a request for assessment.
- Evidence of the child or young person's attainment and rate of progress.
- Information about the nature, extent and cause of the child or young person's SEN.
- Evidence of the action already taken by the provider to meet the SEN.
- Evidence that where progress has been made, it is only because of sustained additional support/intervention over and above what is usually provided from the normal resources of an educational setting.
- Evidence of the child or young person's physical, emotional and social development and health needs.

The Local Authority's EHC assessment panel meets every week to consider requests. To demonstrate transparency of decision making, we would encourage SENCOs and other relevant educational staff to observe the panel, as it is also an effective CPD tool. If you wish to do this, contact the SEN Casework team at County Hall for further details.

If the Local Authority does initiate an EHC assessment, **this does not mean that an EHC plan will be issued**. Initiation of an assessment gives the authority time to assess the needs of the child/young person and the required provision in more detail by gaining advice from education, health and care professionals. A SEND Caseworker will be assigned to each individual case. They will co-ordinate the EHC assessment and will be the main contact with the parents/carers, young person and professionals and they will keep them informed of progress.

If an EHC Plan is not issued, the SEN caseworker will:

- Ensure parents/carers have appropriate information about services on the Local Offer.

- Oversee an appropriate 'handover' of the case to the educational provider. The advice obtained as part of the assessment should be used to write a robust SEN support plan to meet the needs of the child or young person.

Mediation & tribunal processes in Durham

This section is currently under review.

Reviewing EHC plans

There must be a formal statutory review of an EHCP annually. Any specialists who are actively involved; have been involved within the review period or who contributed to the initial assessment **must have at least six weeks' notice of the review meeting so they can attend and/or give a written update on progress.**

Schools and educational providers should ensure the EHC Plan is reviewed throughout the year with parents/carers or young person. The longer-term outcomes in the EHC plan should be broken down into shorter term steps towards these outcomes.

When writing new outcomes, there should always be a 'golden thread' directly from the aspirations to the provision, this is achieved by thinking about outcomes as steps on the journey towards the aspirations.

Outcomes

Effective outcomes for children and young people with SEND are crucial in ensuring the correct support is put in place.

The SEND Code of Practice 0-25 years defines an outcome as:

“A benefit or difference made to the individual as a result of intervention.”

It is recommend to have approximately six outcomes so they are realistic and achievable for the child/young person.

Outcomes should:

- Reflect the views and aspirations of children and young people and their families.
- Link to the assessed needs and additional to and different from provision.
- Usually be longer term (Key stage).
- Be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**imebound (SMART)
- Be focussed on the Preparing for Adulthood pathways.

There is detailed guidance for setting outcomes on the Local Offer PfA section <https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/22416/PfA-Outcomes>

Schools can use an Individual Learning Plan or termly 'action plans'. When reviewing these, schools should consider whether these supporting targets remain appropriate; set new interim targets and in exceptional cases, agree new outcomes.

All reviews must focus on the child or young person's progress towards achieving the longer-term outcomes specified in the EHC Plan and the information from the interim plans and reviews contributes to the final statutory annual review meeting.

The statutory annual review meeting should be held four weeks before the EHC plan's initial date of issue, in order for schools and the Local Authority to meet statutory deadlines.

Training on all aspects of the EHCA is available, details can be found on the Local Offer: <https://www.durham.gov.uk/sendcoursedirectory>

Reviewing EHC plans between year groups

It is important that when a child or young person is **moving year groups**, that the final review of the academic year takes into consideration any factors that may be important in the next year group (e.g. the physical environment). Wherever possible, new teachers or the SENCO should be part of the review.

Reviewing EHC plans when transferring between Nursery and Reception

It is important that when a child moves from a nursery provision to a reception class, that the final review in the nursery takes into consideration any factors that may be important in the transition to school (e.g. full day provision, new physical environment). Reception staff should be part of the final nursery review and take part in an enhanced transition process for all children with an EHC plan. Staff from reception should review the plan, its outcomes and targets, as quickly as possible in the autumn term to ensure the targets are fit for purpose.

Reviewing EHC plans when transferring between Years 6 and 7

It is particularly important that in Year 6, statutory annual reviews are completed by 31st December. At this review, consideration should be given to reflect any adaptations to the provision that may be needed in a secondary school environment. As soon as the secondary school place has been confirmed, the feeder and receiving schools should collaborate to ensure a well-planned and enhanced transition takes place.

The Local Authority will send notice to the receiving secondary school to advise them to hold a review before the end of the Autumn term; to ensure the plan, its outcomes, and any costings are updated. Schools should use the statutory annual review paperwork accompanied by a current support timetable and costed provision map. The onus is on the school to ensure any additional funding has followed the child/young person into school and if needed, top up funding can be requested, providing the school can demonstrate the provision is in place and having an impact on the progress of the pupil.

If you have any specific queries about this process, please contact the Link caseworker in the SEND Casework team.

Reviewing EHC plans in Years 9 and 11

From Year 9 onwards it is important that the underpinning principles of the Preparing for Adulthood agenda are introduced, explored and captured within the review process.

Relevant and purposeful discussion should take place during the selection of options for KS4 with extra opportunities to discuss aspirations with careers advisers where appropriate.

This will enable choices to be firmly embedded in preparation for the transition review in Year 11. The concept of the 'Golden Thread' as described earlier in this section, supports this process.

In Year 11 those young people with an EHC plan and a SEN Support Plan will have access to CEIAG support via a DurhamWorks Progression Adviser from the Progression and Learning team who will endeavour to meet with the young person and their family around the time of their review to discuss individual career plans.

School should include the family and young person in discussing their needs and aspirations and the Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) outcomes.

The PfA Outcomes Toolkit details the preparing for adulthood pathways:

- Good health
- Friendships, Relationships & Community
- Independent Living
- Employment

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/22416/PfA-Outcomes>

What to do if a setting is concerned about the provision for a child/young person with an EHC Plan

There should be triangulated evidence about the child/young person from the educational setting, parent and any specialist involved. Settings should consider:

- Has the educational setting completed recent and relevant assessments?
- Has the educational setting sought advice from specialists?
- Has the educational setting acted upon the advice from specialists?
- Has the setting shown that relevant, purposeful and meaningful action has been put in place and monitored robustly?

If all avenues have not been explored:

- Seek further advice/support from relevant professionals and/or the Local Offer.
- Setting to put a robust action plan in place in discussion with parents and young person.
- Actions to be reviewed in a timely manner.

If all avenues have been explored:

- Contact the Link Caseworker to alert and discuss next steps.

Requests for emergency placement for child/young person without an EHCP

The SEND Code of Practice 0-25 years clearly states that requests for emergency places in Special Schools should be exceptional. It states:

Children and young people **without an EHC plan** can be placed in special schools and special post-16 institutions only in the following exceptional circumstances, where they are:

- admitted to a special school or special post-16 institution to be assessed for an EHC plan with their agreement (in the case of a young person) or the agreement of their parent (in the case of a child), the Local Authority, the head teacher or principal of the special school or special post-16 institution and anyone providing advice for the assessment
- admitted to a special school or special post-16 institution following a change in their circumstances with their agreement (in the case of a young person) or the agreement of their parent (in the case of a child), the Local Authority and the head teacher or principal of the special school or special post-16 institution. Where an emergency placement of this kind is made the Local Authority should immediately initiate an EHC needs assessment or re-assessment
- in hospital and admitted to a special school which is established in a hospital, or

- admitted to a special academy (including a special free school) whose academy arrangements allow it to admit children or young people with SEN who do not have an EHC plan.
- The Head Teacher should submit a business case outlining how the child/youngperson meets the criteria above. This should be sent to sen.casework@durham.gov.uk The school should also send any supporting documents to demonstrate any significant changes- for example medical reports, previous SEN support plans etc.
- The LA will make a decision on an emergency placement and whether undertaking an EHC assessment would be appropriate. If so, the EHC assessment will follow the usual statutory timescales of 20 weeks.